



THE INDEPENDENT

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6,000 heart attacks a year from car fumes

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Air pollution caused mainly by road traffic is triggering 6,000 heart attacks in Britain each year, according to medical researchers. Since roughly half of all heart attacks are fatal, the new finding supports the views of a growing number of doctors and scientists that pollution kills several thousand Britons each year.

A team led by Dr Jan Poloniecki at St George's Hospital Medical School in London concluded that one in 50 heart attack victims arriving at London hospitals is there as a result of poor air quality outdoors. Their research is published in the latest issue of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

He analysed seven years of data from the late 1980s and early 1990s covering nearly 400,000 hospital admissions and levels of five key air pollutants, all produced mainly by traffic in the capital's busy roads and motorways.

The researchers were looking for a link between air quality on any one day and the number of people being rushed to hospital with heart and circulatory problems the next day. They used complex techniques of statistical analysis to probe for any connections.

They found that heart attacks, in which some of heart's muscles are killed by a lack of blood supply, rose in line with the previous day's levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and particulates, microscopic sooty specks. But these linkages between

air pollution and health were found only in the colder months, from October to March, and not during the warmer April to September period. The worst pollution episodes are generally during particularly cold, still periods in winter when freezing air becomes trapped over cities and the concentration of fumes builds up over several days.

But the researchers could find no linkage between heart attacks and rising levels of low level ozone, another important pollutant known to cause discomfort to people with chest illnesses and asthma. Ozone is produced by a chain of chemical reactions which begins with traffic fumes. For high concentrations to build up there has to be little wind and long hours of strong sunshine, so ozone smogs are found only in summer.

The researchers' article says there are now "plausible mechanisms" by which traffic emissions might trigger blood circulation illnesses. "Our results strengthen the case for a causal link with myocardial infarction [heart attacks]."

Over the past few years, a stream of big statistical studies from Europe, North America and more recently the UK have suggested a link between air pollution, deaths and hospital admissions. It seems that the elderly and those already suffering heart and lung disorders, are most at risk.

The 1990s have seen Britain and the other European Union nations implementing measures to cut pollution from new cars, lorries and buses, under EU smog-busting laws.

The most significant of these

have been compulsory catalytic converters fitted to the exhaust pipes of all new cars. The annual MoT test also checks for levels of carbon monoxide in exhaust fumes. Stricter standards for new cars came into force this year, and in 2000 new vehicles will have to meet a still tougher third stage of standards.

But while these laws should bring about big improvements in air quality, and thereby save thousands of lives, there are powerful countervailing forces.

The number of cars and car usage is rising steadily, and those trends have accelerated with the strong economic recovery. For years to come, millions of older vehicles will not have catalytic converters fitted, produce copious quantities of pollutants and face no annual emissions checks. There are also worries that as cars with "cats" age, the performance of their pollution-cutting equipment falls off sharply.

The Government has forecast that air quality should now have begun improving after deteriorating through the 1980s, partly because of moves to curb traffic fumes and the drastic decline in coal burning by power stations. But it will not be possible for several years to say if things are getting better.

One reason is that a nationwide network of monitoring stations has only been in place for a few years; this makes it difficult to establish a baseline and see trends emerging. Another is that pollution levels depend on the weather and therefore fluctuate markedly from year to year, irrespective of the exact quantities being emitted.



Tory wet: Party leader William Hague about to take the plunge on a water slide during a visit yesterday to Flambards theme park, near Helston, Cornwall. Photograph: Paul Slater/ApeX

Camelot director to leave after final bonus

David Lister

David Rigg, the public face of Camelot, operators of the National Lottery, is leaving the company. Mr Rigg, Camelot's director of communications, was criticised as one of the lottery "fat cats" earlier this year after it was revealed his salary package had almost doubled to £333,333.

His total salary package rose by 90 per cent last year - the biggest leap of all the Camelot directors. He is due to pick up around £80,000 in performance-related bonuses on 1 October - two days before he leaves Camelot.

Mr Rigg was a founder board member of Camelot in 1993, and spent many of those early days wooing both journalists and others involved in the lottery good causes, telling them of Camelot's efficiency and ability to deliver.

His public relations skills could not, however, overcome the public distaste when it was revealed that in total, the amount paid out to directors this year rose from £1.67m to £2.23m, while profits slipped from £51.1m to £46.8m.

News of the pay-outs sparked a public outcry, with claims that more cash should be going to the good causes.

Mr Rigg was away on a half-term holiday with his wife and children when the results were leaked.

After a showdown with Culture Secretary Chris Smith, the directors agreed to pay undisclosed sums from future bonus payments into a confidential charity fund.

Announcing Mr Rigg's departure yesterday, Camelot chief executive Tim Holley said:

"David has been one of the architects of the success of the National Lottery and has been an outstanding communications director."

"We are sorry to lose him but wish him well in his future endeavours."

In a statement issued by the company, Mr Rigg said that he felt the time had come to move on.

David Rigg said: "The lottery has played a major part in my life for the last seven years



Rigg: Due to collect £80,000 bonus days before he leaves

and has absorbed most of my time for the last four-and-a-half years."

"Working as part of the Camelot team has been both a pleasure and a privilege. I have also, in the vast majority of instances, greatly enjoyed my literally thousands of dealings with the media over this time."

"However, I believe it is right for me to move on at this stage and seek new challenges for the future."

Black actors confuse police trainees

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Hundreds of police officers are to be given a second chance to take promotion examinations after failing because they were unable to deal with black actors pretending to be traffic wardens.

The 13 ethnic minority actors who took part in the national Examinations Board decided to drop the practice after a psychologist told them officers had performed better when dealing with white actors and that this may be because race was confusing them.

An organisation representing black officers yesterday said the affair was very worrying and raised wider issues about police attitudes to race.

The controversy follows last year's sergeants' exams which used black actors for the first time - about half the 3,200 tests involved black actors in one exercise. The Police Promotions Examinations Board decided to drop the practice after a psychologist told them officers had performed better when dealing with white actors and that this may be because race was confusing them.

The Home Office and police associations yesterday criticised the move by the official training body, even though their representatives were on the board that made the original decision to stop using black actors.

The board had written in the past few weeks to the 13 actors involved to say they would not be used in the practical part of the examinations so that the exercises could be "standardised".

It followed a survey of the previous year's results by an occupational psychologist who found there were "significant differences in performance" by

those candidates who had to deal with black actors and those who had white actors. The board decided that many officers believed the examination was to test equal opportunities skills, rather than their knowledge of road laws.

As a result, the board decided to scrap the results of that section of the exam and give all officers who failed another chance. This will affect about 800 of the officers who failed.

Leroy Logan, of the Black Police Association, said yesterday: "While we agree that there is some merit in the find-

ings of the psychologist we would argue that the real issue here is the apparent inability of some candidates to relate to black people without seeing colour as the issue."

"If this is happening in the controlled situation of an exam, then how might their perceptions be translated in real operational situations?"

A spokeswoman for the Home Office said: "It was a misguided attempt to standardise the examinations. It is clearly unacceptable. Steps are being taken to reverse the decision and reinstate the ethnic minority

role players." Spokesmen for the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Federation welcomed the decision to overturn the move. However, there remains confusion about who authorised the original policy when the Home Office, Federation and Acpo all have members on the board.

The head of the Police Promotions Examinations Unit in Harrogate, Superintendent Glenn Hutton, acknowledged that there had been a "hiccup" in its procedures, but he said it was a misunderstanding about how the exam system worked.

Yes! Yes! Er - what was your name again?

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

It's the morning after and you have not got a clue where you are or who they are or what you have done. But now forgetful lovers have the perfect excuse - all they have to do is tell their partners: "Sorry, I must have been suffering from recurrent coital amnesia."

It may sound like a state of mind induced by one too many bottles of chardonnay. But, according to the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, this medical condition, characterised by sudden and dramatic memory loss after sexual intercourse, is not an uncommon clinical occurrence.

Doctors in a letter to the journal recount the case of a man in his sixties who frequently suffered bouts of amnesia after sex. "During these events he would repeatedly ask questions such as 'What are we doing?' 'What time of year is it?' 'What

time of day is this?'" reported Dr Russell Lane of the West London Neurosciences Centre.

The memory loss lasted for 30 to 60 minutes on each occasion, after which he recovered perfectly except for the fact that he had no memory of intercourse and only the haziest recollection of foreplay.

Although he seemed aware of experiencing difficulties during the amnesia attack, the doctors found his activities during intercourse and after were

"unremarkable". Investigations showed nothing except an irregular brain signal which doctors attributed to migraine.

Recurrent coital amnesia is thought to be one type of a more common condition known as transient global amnesia (TGA), which happens during periods of physical and emotional stress. It is characterised by the sudden development of amnesia usually accompanied by repetitive questioning but without any other alteration in

consciousness or any obvious neurological disturbance such as an epileptic fit.

"The fact that a person can repeatedly experience selective amnesia for sexual intercourse, but otherwise function normally during the amnesic period, raises interesting social and medicolegal considerations," Dr Lane said. Or, as agony aunt Clare Rayner puts it rather more forcefully: "What a glorious new excuse - 'Sorry, I forgot all about it, darling.'"



758 000
TSB We want to say

QUICKLY
Silver for Britain
Denise Lewis won Britain's first medal in the athletics World Championships in Athens last night, when she finished second in the heptathlon.
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news

significant shorts

Hero pilot fights shy of bosses' praise

The airline pilot who safely crash-landed his crippled aircraft with 66 passengers on board was too shy to meet the praise heaped upon him yesterday. Captain John Jones, 40, had just left Manchester airport on his British Regional Airlines flight bound for Ireland when an undercarriage failed, but he told his bosses it was just part of his job.

The aircraft, with a total of 70 people on board, turned back when it was discovered the undercarriage on the left wing would not work. It circled for three hours over the Irish Sea to use up excess fuel before the captain, one of the airline's most experienced pilots, brought it safely down on the tarmac at Manchester in what his bosses described as "a text book example of how to handle the aircraft in the circumstances".

Mike Bathgate, the airline's commercial director, said: "The captain is a very private individual. He believes it was very much an overall combined effort between him and the other crew." Captain Jones, who has been with the airline for 10 years, was speaking to investigators from the Department of Transport's Air Accident Investigation Branch to try to discover the cause of the failure.

Randeep Ramesh

Double murderer to be released

A convicted double murderer is to be released from prison after 22 years protesting his innocence. It was disclosed last night. Reginald Dudley, 72, who was convicted with Robert Maynard in 1977 for the killings of London underworld figures William Moseley and Michael Cornwall, is to be let out of Ford Prison, Sussex, on licence on tomorrow, his solicitor, Andrea Storey, said.

Dudley and Maynard, who remains in jail, have been the subjects of Britain's longest-running miscarriage of justice campaign. Their cases are currently being looked at by the Criminal Cases Review Commission which is considering whether they should be sent back to the Court of Appeal. Moseley's handless and headless body was discovered in 1975. The following year, Cornwall was shot dead. The only evidence against them came from an armed robber who claimed they had admitted the murders while in jail. However, he later admitted lying in order to get a shorter sentence.

'Men in Black' sets box office record



The sci-fi action comedy *Men in Black* has broken British box office records in its opening weekend, makers Columbia Tristar claimed yesterday. The film starring Will Smith (left) and Tommy Lee Jones as men "protecting the Earth from the scum of the universe", took £7,066,748 at the turnstiles up to Sunday night.

That figure beat the previous record holder, *Independence Day*, in which Smith also starred, last summer which made £7,005,905 over the same period. However, Columbia Tristar's figures included Thursday previews - and *Men in Black* opened early at more than 300 screens around the country.

Barclays faces action over pay

Barclays is facing a campaign of industrial action in a "rapidly escalating" dispute over pay. The bank's two unions have agreed to co-ordinate action, which is likely to include an overtime ban and a work-to-rule, after the "collapse" of talks. Barclays turned down a union request to take a dispute over a new performance-related scheme to the conciliation service Acas, arguing that it had already made substantial modifications to its original proposals.

Jim Lowe, assistant secretary of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union (Bifu), complained: "This from a bank that is expected to announce half-yearly profits of more than £1bn later this week." Bifu and the Barclays union UNIFI said that the new pay scheme would reduce the amount of money the bank puts into staff salaries. The two unions have decided to co-ordinate action, although no date has been fixed for it to start.

Man hunted over landlord's death

A former psychiatric patient is being hunted by police after his elderly landlord was found stabbed to death in a burning house. Police took the unusual step of naming unemployed David Edward Roberts, 24, as the man they wish to question about the killing of Joe Osmond, 70. They warned the public to stay clear of Mr Roberts, who was offered a room to rent by Mr Osmond after they met at their local rugby club. The murder inquiry was launched after the emergency services were alerted to a fire at Mr Osmond's two-bedroomed cottage in Salisbury, Wiltshire, where they found his body inside. He had suffered multiple stab wounds.

East 17 star on assault charge



Pop star Brian Harvey appeared in court yesterday at a hearing to decide whether he will stand trial for an alleged assault on a photographer. Harvey, 22, singer with East 17, was mobbed by teenage fans as he arrived for an old-style committal hearing at Bow Street magistrates' court in central London. Harvey (left), from Loughton, Essex, and Stephen Exley, from Walthamstow, east London, are jointly charged with assaulting an Argentinian photographer, Reinaldo Vargas, 43. The offences are alleged to have taken place outside Stringfellows night club in London's West End. The hearing was adjourned until 7 October.

Study urges lower drinking age

A report commissioned by police into young people's experiences of drink and drugs yesterday advocated lowering the legal age for buying alcohol in pubs from 18 to 16. The controversial study carried out by the University of Wales, Bangor, for North Wales police shows that about 70 per cent of 16-year-olds are drinking already. It suggests one way of taking them off the streets and allowing them to drink in a more controlled environment would be to let them into pubs with identity cards.

Landlords would also have to adopt a tougher attitude on the amounts of alcohol being sold to any individual. But the university researchers also suggest that the age at which teenagers can buy alcohol across the counter at off-licences should be increased.

Bath lines up for lottery funding

An art exhibition featuring a scum line around a bath tub is to get National Lottery funding. Arts Council officials have approved a grant of £4,176 to help the Bristol-based City Projects arts group stage the controversial exhibition. The bath tub will be one of about 10 works put on show in November.

people



Bosom buddies: Television's favourite twentysomethings have secured a bumper pay-day

What's the price of a Friend? About £2.5m, apparently

They may be "there for us when the rain starts to fall" but their jobs are no longer a joke and they are certainly not broke. The cast of *Friends* have just signed a deal for £2.5m per episode.

The contract could make the series, featuring six impossibly hip New Yorkers hanging out in a trendy café, the most expensive in television history.

Hollywood trade papers yesterday reported that the hit comedy's US network has finally agreed to pay £2.5m per show - the previous figure was about \$825,000.

This should keep the cast, who threatened to walk-out last year after a row over their salaries, happy to be there for each other for at least a few more episodes.

However, since the programme was first aired, casting directors and advertisers have been falling over themselves to sign up the actors, who were all pretty much unknown before *Friends* came along.

Jennifer Aniston, whose role as the spoilt Jewish princess, Rachel, is secondary to her legendary hair-cut, is currently starring in a couple of television advertisements, as well as lining up the film roles.

Her co-stars, Courtney Cox, better known as Monica, the control-freak chef, and Lisa Kudrow, who plays the ditzy masseuse Phoebe, have also landed parts

in films. Cox most recently played a bitchy TV reporter in Wes Craven's latest shock-horror movie, *Scream*.

Kudrow, who latest role is playing another loveable airhead in *Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion*, is already afraid of being typecast.

As for the boys, David Schwimmer, the lovable paleontologist Ross, Matthew Perry, arguably the cast member who gets the best lines as Chandler, and Matt LeBlanc, who plays the irresistible but dim-witted Joey, the offers have flooded in.

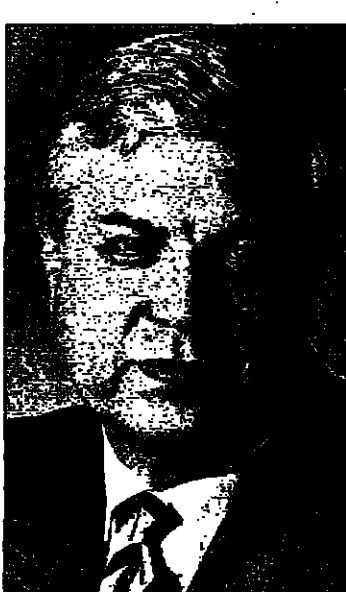
Schwimmer was the first *Friend* to test the movie waters in *Pallbearer* (a flop) but he is now turning his hand to directing, before returning to the other side of the camera in a film with Sir Ian McKellen, no less.

Unfortunately for LeBlanc, life seems to be imitating art as he has been struggling as much as Joey to land a starring role. But he is hoping that will change when he teams up with Gary Oldman for a movie version of *Lost in Space*.

Finally Perry, who has admitted to drug problems, has just netted a cool £1m for the romantic comedy *Fools Rush In*. It's a far cry from the days when, as Rachel would say, they were all searching for "one of those job things".

Kate Watson-Smyth

John Simpson spoils for battle on home front



There's no good news and bad news, just news, he scoffed.

Distinguished BBC war correspondent John Simpson has put himself in the line of fire on the home front, with outspoken attacks on the corporation's director-general, John Birt, former colleague Martin Bell and "good news" fan Martyn Lewis.

Simpson, 53 (right), launched his forthright salvo in the BBC's biggest-selling publication, *Radio Times*, published today.

He joked that, apart from Libya's Gaddafi, it was getting difficult to find a good dictator these days. "You have to visit weird parts of the world to find them - like Television Centre and Broadcasting House."

"The heads of giant corporations can be just as loopy - it's power and the feeling they're always right."

Martin Bell, now the independent MP for Tatton, was wrong to crusade for "involved" reporting on his return from Bosnia, Simpson said. "Martin Bell is talking nonsense and he knows it. 'He was one of the most objective journalists.'"

He added: "It's not my job to shriek that side A is right and side B is wrong. I'm sick of the 'I'm going to tell you everything about me and what I think' school of journalism. You don't watch the BBC for polemic."

But Simpson also condemned live two-way links from trouble spots and Martyn Lewis's "good news" campaign. "That's so silly."

Queen Mother marks 97th year

The Queen Mother celebrated her 97th birthday yesterday by going on an impromptu walkabout among a crowd of more than 1,000 well-wishers, some of whom had camped overnight at Clarence House.

Leaning heavily on a stick, she smiled and waved at the assembled crowd, who sang Happy Birthday, and handed her flowers, cards, chocolates and cuddly toys.

Accompanied by Prince Andrew, she reviewed a march-past by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales.

Then, with four generations of the Royal Family gathered at Clarence House for a celebratory lunch, the party appeared at the gates with the Queen and her mother at her head.

Prince William, 15, was given pride of place by his great-grandmother when he was at her side to review the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery.

And 12-year-old Prince Harry was also present, with his father, the Prince of Wales.

Jeanne Calment, who at 122 years and five months, was probably the world's oldest person, has died in Arles in southern France. She "slipped away" at 11.15am local time yesterday but was not thought to be suffering any illness.

Born in Arles on February 21 1875, Madame Calment was regarded as a kind of living national archive. She lived alone until she was 111 before consenting to move into an old peoples' home.

Obituaries, page 10

British climber's Himalayan ordeal ends

The British mountaineer Alan Hinkes was resting in Islamabad, Pakistan, last night after spending an excruciating seven days with a slipped disc stranded on a Himalayan mountain.

Bizarrely, the specialist who finally diagnosed the injury turned out to have just returned from nine years working in Darlington Memorial Hospital - only 20 miles from where Mr Hinkes grew up. In Northallerton in North Yorkshire, Dr Rifat Zaidi told Mr Hinkes: "I thought I recognised your accent."

He plans to return to Britain next week to rehabilitate the injury which, in another strange touch, was set off when he was eating a chapatti about halfway up the mountain. Some of its flour made him sneeze. The muscular strain caused a prolapsed disc which could take up to three months to heal completely.

The climber was yesterday taken by helicopter from the lower slopes of Nanga Parbat, which at 8,128 metres (26,660ft) is one of the 14 mountains in the world over 8,000m. Mr Hinkes had previously climbed eight of the 14, and had intended to set a record by conquering the other six in a single sea-

son. If he can climb all 14, he will become only the sixth person to achieve the feat, and the first native English speaker.

But so far in 1997 Mr Hinkes has only managed one, Lhotse, and now fears that it takes too long for his injury to heal that could rule out an attempt this autumn on the two peaks of Annapurna (8,091m) and Dhaulagiri (8,167m).

He used a satellite phone to call Berghaus, his sponsors on the £70,000 expedition, and to call for a helicopter. But for days, the pilot was unable to reach him, leaving Mr Hinkes stranded at his base camp with shrinking supplies of food and painkillers. "I was having three-hour back spasms," he recalled yesterday.

Eventually, on Sunday, he managed to ignore the pain enough to climb down 700m to 3,350m, just above a glacier which would have made further progress more difficult, hoping it would be easier for a helicopter to reach him. "I got my cook to build a bonfire, with branches from nearby shrubs, and to make a big H with stones on the ground, then just before dawn broke today I called the helicopter."

Charles Arthur

briefing

SHOPPING

Rude staff and long queues keep customers dissatisfied

Rude staff and long queues at the checkout are to blame for growing customer dissatisfaction with service in shops, according to a report published today. Overall, the number of people complaining about service in at least one shop they visit has soared from 26 per cent in 1992 to 43 per cent this year.

DIY and electrical goods stores are the worst offenders, followed by shoe and clothes shop, the survey published by the National Consumer Council disclosed.

Places with the most satisfied customers are hairdressers and barbers' shops, where service was rated good or very good by 90 per cent of customers - closely followed by chemists.

Supermarkets come third, leapfrogging local grocers and newsagents for the first time, with 86 per cent of customers reporting good service.

Major bugbears cited by shoppers are queuing at checkouts or not enough tills being opened, and staff who are rude and unhelpful or too pushy. Poorly-trained assistants are also a source of irritation - particularly in DIY and electrical goods stores.

The only area of growing customer satisfaction is prices, with fewer shoppers complaining of either high or rising costs now than five years ago.

The survey into shopping trends also disclosed that Britain is not a nation of shopaholics. People visit the shops less now than five years ago - although this does not mean they are spending less.

TECHNOLOGY

The 'thinking' computer decides

A loans company is using a high-tech "intelligent" computer program to help it make instant decisions on applications. It uses neural technology, which tries to mimic the workings of a human brain, to make split-second judgments on individuals.

Neural computers are often called "thinking computers" because of their ability to learn from experience and "best guess" a situation, just as a human can respond to new and changing situations.

The computer, called Decider, is being used by Lloyds Bowmaker Motor Finance, part of the Lloyds TSB group. It is "taught" with historical customer data, it does not have to be programmed with fixed rules or equations and it can automatically extract essential characteristics from previous applicant information.

Decider then makes a decision on whether to accept a loan or not, and gives reasons for its choice. In a trial, when it was pitted against traditional loan scrutiny techniques, Decider was shown, on average, to be 10 per cent more accurate.



ATTITUDES

Young more tolerant towards gays

More than two in five young people in Britain believe that the age of consent for homosexuals should be lowered, according to the findings of a survey on youth attitudes.

The NOP poll of 986 adults aged 16 years and over in England and Wales, however, found that this general increase in tolerance for homosexuality among those aged 16-34 was not reflected among the over-35s. Seventy-two per cent of the general adult population declared themselves to be against any lowering of the age of consent from 18 to 16 years.

Tolerance on the issue of gay sex does not extend to smoking or "alcopops". More than two-thirds of those questioned were in favour of raising the legal age of smoking from the current 16 to 18 years of age. Support for a total ban on alcopops among the under-25s, whilst less overwhelming than among the over-35s, was still around one third of those questioned.

Louise Hancock

LEISURE

Man's (or woman's) best friend?

They are regularly hurt by them, don't always trust them, and often have to lie in order to spend time with them, but 63 per cent of all riders say they prefer the company of their horses to their partners.

Although 87 per cent of riders say their horse can be "temperamental" and almost half have been quite badly injured, 72 per cent of riders admit that they tell their horse their problems, rather than their partner. And the national survey, compiled by *Gallop* magazine, shows that 90 per cent of women riders say they would rather have a new horse than a baby.

Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) say they wish they could take both their partner and horse on holiday, while half admitted to having sneaked off work for a secret rendezvous with their horse.

Perhaps not surprisingly, 53 per cent of partners were said to be jealous of the relationship. With good reason: almost half of all riders say if things came to a head they wouldn't be able to decide between their partner or horse. A quarter would definitely choose their horse.

Jojo Moyes

PROPERTY

Home-owners do it themselves

Home-owners have been spending an average of £320 a year each on DIY - more than one-fifth of the total amount they splash out for work on their homes, a report shows today.

The figure comes in research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, using data from a study carried out by the Building Research Establishment with 5,500 home-owners for the 1991 English House Condition Survey.

It found that most DIY work involved decorating and upgrading properties, with 40 per cent of kitchens and 30 per cent of bathrooms being fitted by owners themselves.

And as many as 40 per cent of owner-occupiers who carried out major improvements or work at home chose to do at least some of the job themselves.

Labour-intensive jobs were more likely to be carried out by DIY than those where the cost of materials was relatively high, the report authors found. But the complexity of any task appeared to be a more important factor in owners' decisions whether to use contractors or to tackle the job themselves.

Agnès Séverin

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CJD deaths leave questions over clusters

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Two more deaths from the "new variant" strain of the fatal brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), linked with "mad cow disease" were disclosed yesterday by the Government, bringing the total number of notified cases to 21 at the end of June.

But the figures hide a peculiar clustering of cases: in Ashford, Kent, in Tyne and Wear in the North-east and near Glasgow. So far, three of the people who have died of "v-CJD" have lived near Ashford - which is itself close to the site where the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was diagnosed in 1985.

Two other cases are based near Glasgow, including Janice Stuart, of Milton of Campsie near Glasgow, who died of v-CJD aged 35 last September, and a suspected victim, Donnamarie McGovern, aged 15, who has a serious brain disorder, at Southern General Hospital in Glasgow.

The presence of clusters among such a small number of cases could be a statistical accident. "When the numbers are so small you can convince yourself of anything," said Dr Stephen Dealler, an independent analyst of the BSE epidemic yesterday. "But the fact is, the first cases of BSE were noticed in Ashford."

Last night, members of the CJD Support Association were unwilling to discuss the idea. "If that is all you want to talk about, we may have to find some other way of getting this across to newspapers," said one member.

The Government triggered a major BSE scare when announced in March 1996 that the growing number of cases of v-CJD was probably caused by exposure to the disease agent that causes BSE. However, it has never specified that this had to be through eating BSE-infected food.

People in Ashford would be no more likely to eat BSE-infected food than other people at most stages of the epidemic. However, some scientists have called attention to the presence of a rendering plant which discharges 120,000 litres of effluent daily, and to an event in 1963 in Smarden when two acres of land were contaminated by fluoracetamide, a highly toxic organo-halogen which is chemically related to organo-phosphates (OPs). Some people have suggested that OPs caused BSE - although evidence from the Continent contradicts this.

At the same time, there is no clear match for the incidents around Ashford in Tyne and Wear or near Glasgow. The CJD Surveillance Unit, which monitors cases and records victims' personal histories, had no comment last night. "While the numbers are so small, you can sum it up and say that there's no excess, that it's just statistical anomaly," said Dr Dealler.

Chains, delays, dishonesty and gazumping. The evils of house-buying come under government scrutiny

Steve Boggan

It wasn't supposed to be like this. With a £30,000 deposit and a guaranteed mortgage, Claudine Sturdy should have been every vendor's dream - a first-time buyer with no chain and an overwhelming desire to move quickly.

But, like thousands of others, she soon found that estate agents, building societies, surveyors and sheer bad luck conspire to make buying a house as difficult as catching a greased snake.

Yesterday, the Government made the first moves towards finding out what causes buyers pain and stress and how the process of buying a property can be made simpler, quicker and less frustrating.

A steering group representing lawyers, agents, consumers, lenders and other professionals met to draw up guidelines for researchers who will track 1,000 sales to find out which ones go wrong and why.

So far, Ms Sturdy, 28, a film production co-ordinator from south London, has encountered all the problems that the group, set up by housing minister Hilary Armstrong, will be studying - chains, delays, dishonesty and, perhaps most frustrating of all, gazumping.

"The first place I saw was a dream and a real bargain, a three-bedroom flat for £70,000 in Brixton," she said.

"The people I was buying from were buying something else in Norwood and everything was going smoothly. But then there was a small legal hitch involving the lease and, unfortunately, the vendors had incredibly slow solicitors."

"A job that should have taken four days took them four weeks and in the meantime my vendors lost their place because their vendor wouldn't wait any longer. And someone nipped in and gazumped them by £2,000."

But worse was to come. Ms Sturdy found another place, a two-bedroom flat in Streatham, for £90,000.

She offered £85,000 but was told by her agents that the vendor had placed it with a second agent at £95,000.

"My agents told me that if I raised my price to £90,000 then I could have it," she said. "Then they - not the other agents - went and sold it for £95,000."

"I am absolutely fed up with the whole business."

"Everyone tries to rip you off all the time and no one keeps their word and I feel insulted that anyone could possibly think that

you believe anything they say. We need protection for vendors and buyers so one isn't waiting too long for their house to be sold, and so the other's offer is honoured."

Ms Armstrong said she was determined to provide protection for people like Ms Sturdy and promised to act on the results of the study, which should be finished next summer.

"The Government is determined to identify the root causes of delays and other problems which cause distress and misery to home-buyers and sellers," she said.

However, given the diversity of the steering group - with representatives from the Office of Fair Trading, HM Land Registry, the Law Society, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the National Association of Estate Agents, the Incorporated Society of Auctioneers and Valuers and the Consumers' Association - vested interests are likely to make agreement possible.

One option, to adopt the Scottish system whereby an offer, once accepted, is binding,

already seems to be losing its appeal. "It does prevent gazumping once an offer has been accepted," said Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents.

"But before you can make an offer, you have to have your mortgage offer and survey in place. "If your offer is rejected, then all the money you have spent on your legal fees and survey goes down the drain. Theoretically, that could happen two or three times before you get a property."

The Consumers' Association wants to see some form of protection available for buyers but feels the best way to avoid disappointment is to speed up the way the system works.

"Gazumping takes place between an offer being made and the completion of the transaction," said Sophie Gumpel, a principal researcher with the association.

"If the whole process were made faster, less convoluted and more of a 'one-stop-shop' process, there would be less time for gazumping to take place."



Disillusioned: Claudine Sturdy, who has been let down twice in her hunt for a flat - "Everyone tries to rip you off and no one keeps their word" Photograph: Andrew Buuman

Pub chain calls time on alcopops as more companies join ban

Louise Jury

The bubble may be bursting on alcopops. The sweet-tasting drinks which prompted public outrage by supposedly luring the young to alcohol were dealt another blow yesterday.

JD Wetherspoon, the fast-expanding chain of 194 pubs, announced it was banning all the drinks which revel in such names as Hooper's Hooch, Shott's Lemon Jag and Zanzibar Sling.

Since their introduction in Britain two years ago, there has been a host of critical stories. Unwitting parents packed the alcoholic drinks in lunch boxes. Stirling University banned them from the campus and even bars at the House of Commons have refused requests to stock them.

The Co-op and Iceland food stores have cleared the controversial beverages from their shelves. And in a mark of the cultural impact, the issue was even raised in a television soap. Tinhead, a teenager in Brookside, was made to look a complete fool when he tried to impress the girls at the youth club with a few alcopops.

JD Wetherspoon embarked on a trial ban at its busiest pub, the Hamilton Hall, at Liverpool Street station in London two months ago. After customers proved happy to take an alternative tiple, it extended the ban yesterday.

The bad publicity the drinks have generated has prompted its decision more than any moral crusade. Chair-

man Tim Martin said: "We simply do not want to be associated with the controversy."

The chain sells 10-15,000 bottles a week. But Mr Martin said: "We have considered the situation carefully. Alcopops have had a lot of bad publicity and many people are concerned that they may be attractive to people too young to drink legally."

The decision was welcomed and condemned in equal measure. Andrew Chevis, of the Portman Group, the drinks' industry-funded watchdog, said the pub chain was missing the point. "We do not believe that for a company like JD Wetherspoon to ban alcopops will have a significant impact on alcohol misuse by young people."

Out of 200 children admitted to the Alder Hey children's hospital in Liverpool last year with drinking problems, only six followed consumption of alcopops. Mr Chevis said a Portman Group report later this month will highlight other drinks causing more problems, although he refused to name them.

Smart Cain, spokesman for Bass who make Hooper's Hooch, which has 70 per cent of the market, questioned Wetherspoon's motivation in banning a drink which was popular with 20 to 30-year-olds. Around three million bottles and cans are sold each week. "Alcopops sit comfortably alongside beer, cider and shorts. They're not a fad and there's a need to stop demonising them," he said.

Yet Fiona McIntosh, editor of Company magazine for young women in their twenties, said it was not simply under-age drinkers which were cause for concern. Young women were drinking too much and often failed to realise they were.

"Alcopops are quite clunky and fun. It's probably quite difficult to estimate how much you're putting away," she said.

Mark Bennett, of Alcohol Concern, said individual retailers should not be left to make such decisions. There was a need for an independent panel, not the Portman Group, to assess their acceptability. "The test of these drinks is their disproportionate appeal to people under the age of 16."

Alcopops came third behind cider and lager for under-age drinkers. That was considerable success for a new drink. It was also notable because research showed alcopops attracted some young people who admitted they would not otherwise be drinking alcohol at all.

But Mr Bennett said industry sources were muttering already that the appeal of the fizzy drinks was waning. "People approaching their 18th birthday want to be drinking something that is different from what the previous set were drinking. So we see a pattern of new types of alcohol products."

Like bottled beers with lime in the top and ice beers, alcopops will have a successor yet.



Last orders: A crate of alcopops waiting to be taken away from the cellar of the Wolf pub in Bury St Edmunds, in Suffolk, yesterday, after the drinks were banned from the bar Photograph: Brian Harris

Young drinkers flouting the law

A report commissioned by police into young people's experiences of alcohol yesterday advocated lowering the legal age for buying drinks in pubs from 18 to 16.

The study carried out by the University of Wales, Bangor, for North Wales police shows that around 70 per cent of 16-year-olds are drinking already. It suggests one way of taking them off the streets and allowing them to drink in a more controlled environment would be to let them into pubs with ID cards.

Landlords would also have to adopt a tougher attitude on the amounts of alcohol being sold to any individual. But alongside this radical solution, the university researchers suggest that the age at which teenagers can buy alcohol across the counter at off-licences should be increased.

Assistant Chief Constable Elfed Roberts, of North Wales police, welcomed a public debate on the most effective ways of tackling the problem and whether changes in the law were required. "Young people by the age of 16, very largely, are quite familiar with alcohol. Some have got into the habit of drinking regularly."

Landlords and alcohol abuse support groups gave a cool response to the idea of lowering the legal age, claiming problems would be exacerbated.

The report surveyed more than 1,200 pupils, aged 11 to 16, in six schools in Gwynedd.

computer decides

high-tech "intelligent" computer makes decisions on applications, it may be to mimic the workings of a human in making judgments on individuals. It is called "thinking computers" and can learn from experience and "test" new ideas to see if they work.

It is being used by Lloyds Bank to help decide if a loan should be granted. It is "taught" by a human and has to be programmed with rules. It can automatically extract essential information from applications and decide whether to accept a loan or not. In a trial, when it was put to the test, it was shown to be more accurate.

merant towards gays

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man's) best friend?

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do it themselves

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Ulster urged to grasp second chance

Jojo Moyes

Ms Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday urged political parties in Ulster not to miss the new opportunity for peace, describing it as "a second chance".

Ms Mowlam, who will meet Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, tomorrow, said that people caught a glimpse of what the future could hold during the first IRA ceasefire which

collapsed with the bombing of the Isle of Dogs in east London in February 1996.

The meeting will be the first between a government minister and Sinn Féin since just before the ending of the 17-month truce. It forms part of preparations for the scheduled entry by republicans to the Stormont talks process next month.

Ms Mowlam told business leaders in Belfast that if she decided by the end of the month

that the ceasefire was genuine, Sinn Féin would have a place at the negotiating table on 15 September. By that time an international commission for arms decommissioning would also be in place. Both British and Irish governments, she insisted, were committed to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations.

Ms Mowlam said that the governments had an opportunity to improve the basis on

which everybody could work together, one that embraced balanced constitutional change more broadly based than the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Politicians, she said, needed to pick up and run with change. "After all, what is there to fear?" she said. "Consent is there as a central and inviolable principle. There isn't going to be any change in Northern Ireland's constitutional status unless a majority here want it. But

if they do want change, we'll support it.

"No one is going to be pushed or bullied or beguiled. Open and honest discussion with all views on the table, is the only sensible and realistic way forward. It threatens no one."

Meanwhile, talks were under way yesterday to try to work out a deal to ensure that this weekend's annual parade by 10,000 Apprentice Boys in Londonderry passes off without trouble.

Representatives of the order, local business leaders and the nationalist Bogside Residents Association attended discussions chaired by the Mayor of Derry, Martin Bradley.

Alistair Simpson, governor of the Apprentice Boys, said after a lengthy meeting that it had been "very constructive". He said that the three sides seemed quite happy with the proposals put forward by the order for Saturday and he was hopeful of

a peaceful parade next weekend.

About 100 members of the local Apprentice Boys are due to parade around the ancient city walls, including a contentious quarter-mile stretch above the Bogside, before joining the main Londonderry parade on Saturday.

The Bogside Residents group said it would not protest against the march around the walls if a deal could be struck over "feed-

er" parades by Apprentice Boys in the nationalist villages of Dunloy, Co Antrim and Bellaghy, Co Londonderry as well as along Belfast's nationalist Lower Ormeau Road.

Last year the walls were closed to the marchers on public safety grounds on the orders of the former secretary of state, Sir Patrick Mayhew. The Apprentice Boys finally carried out their march two months late in October.



Ahead of the rest: Liz Taylor at a ball hosted in Venice by Aristote Onassis

Canadian who clicked with the great and glamorous

Michael Streeter

They are a revealing glimpse of the famous and glamorous of a bygone era. An exhibition of work by the Canadian photographer Roloff Beny provides an insight into the lives of some of the personalities who dominated the cultural stage from the 1950s onwards, including Laurence Olivier, Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev and Coco Chanel. Best known for his interpretations of classical architecture and sculpture, a feature of Beny's rarer portraits were the anecdotes he attached to many of them.

On his portrait of Rex Harrison he describes how he went to the actor's Hollywood home, expecting the shoot to last 10 minutes. Hours later, after a tour of the villa and several songs from Harrison's wife Rachel Roberts, the photographer ran out of time. "I realised I had a plane to catch and I snapped Rex in his monogrammed slippers."

On a photo of Tennessee Williams, taken in 1958, Beny acknowledged the brilliant dialogue the dramatist wrote, then added: "But in conversation he wandered so, that I can't remember anything he said."

Beny, who died in 1984, referred to the photographs as his "People" archive. The exhibition, at Christie's, in King Street, London, runs from 11 to 22 August.



Private lives: Rex Harrison, epitome of English suaveness, at ease in his Hollywood mansion

Suicide MP had made death threat at Commons

Colin Brown and Stephen Goodwin

Friends of the dead Labour MP Gordon McMaster stopped him jumping into the Thames from the terrace of the House of Commons, it emerged last night.

Roger Stott, a close friend of Mr McMaster, who last week gassed himself in his car at home, said the friends at the Commons had persuaded Mr McMaster not to go ahead with his threat to kill himself.

Mr Stott said he could not help blaming himself for failing to do more to prevent the tragedy. "I didn't do enough. I think collectively as MPs we should do something to help MPs like Gordon who are clearly under pressure," he said.

"We need a parliamentary system to help MPs in stress. It crosses all parties and it happened to Iain Mills [a Tory MP who died after heavy drinking]."

Mr McMaster, the MP for Paisley South, left a suicide

note in which he was reported to have condemned two colleagues, Lord Dixon, a former deputy chief whip, and Tommy Graham, MP for the neighbouring seat of Renfrewshire West. Both deny any involvement in a whispering campaign and unsubstantiated smears about him being homosexual and suffering from AIDS.

Mr McMaster asked for a copy to be sent to the Prime Minister and for the letter to be published. Close friends of the MP said it was unlikely that the Government would publish the letter which was clearly written when his mind was disturbed.

The chief whip, Nick Brown, is carrying out an inquiry at the request of the Prime Minister into the allegations contained in the note, but Downing Street sources said it could take some weeks.

The whispering campaign against Mr McMaster, and the hatred within the Paisley Labour Party that lay behind it,

could come under the spotlight if the Crown Office in Edinburgh decides to hold a fatal accident inquiry into the MP's death. Contents of the suicide note might also be made public if such an inquiry were held.

However, FAs - similar to an inquest in England - are by no means automatic in Scotland and last night official sources were doubtful if one would be ordered.

An investigation by Strathclyde police concluded there were no suspicious circumstances behind the MP's suicide.

The police sent a report to the Procurator Fiscal for Paisley, but it would be for his superiors at the Crown Office to decide whether further action should be taken. The police have received no request to pursue the claims of a poison-pen campaign against Mr McMaster.

Fatal accident inquiries are normally ordered when the Crown Office consider issues of

public interest are involved, such as the Dunblane shooting or accidents on North Sea oil rigs.

Meanwhile, Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Minister, came under pressure to speed up a decision on the future use of pesticides which may have played a part in Mr McMaster's decision to commit suicide.

A former professional gardener, Mr McMaster believed he was suffering from the chronic fatigue syndrome ME and that it might have been caused by organophosphates which he used as a pesticide.

Mr McMaster was a supporter of the All Party Group on Organophosphate Pesticides. Its leader, Paul Tyler, wrote to Dr Cunningham calling for an urgent meeting on banning the chemicals. He said: "I hope you will now agree that our meeting is all the more urgent, if only to ensure that our former colleague's commitment to help the victims of OP poisoning is carried on."

Redwood presses on with the Tory attack on Simon

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Redwood today will ignore the threats of libel action by the Government and challenge ministers to come clean about the benefits that the trade minister, Lord Simon, will make on his £2m BP shares in a Jersey trust.

He will challenge the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, over her assurances that Lord Simon would not benefit from having his shares in the trust. Mr Redwood said the trade minister would benefit because the company would gain from the arrangement.

Stepping up his campaign over the alleged conflict of interest between Lord Simon's shareholdings and his role as a trade minister, Mr Redwood

also accused Mrs Beckett of misleading the Commons over her replies on Lord Simon's other non-BP shareholdings.

Misleading the House is a sackable offence under the revised ministerial code of practice issued by the Government. Mr Redwood accused Mrs Beckett of giving assurances on 23 July that Lord Simon had transferred the Grand Met holdings worth an estimated £14,000 into a blind trust, but his name was still on the share holding last Friday.

A spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry rejected the charge, insisting that Lord Simon had signed for the shares to be transferred into the blind trust, as Mrs Beckett had informed the House and there were delays in the procedure.

Mr Redwood is determined

to keep up the pressure on the Government, in spite of misgivings among some senior Tory MPs and peers. One former Cabinet minister is upset at the style of the attack on Lord Simon, and there have been rumblings of discontent in the House of Lords among Tory peers at the pursuit of Lord Simon, one of Britain's top businessmen, by the Conservatives in the Commons.

But William Hague, the Tory leader, who led the attack in the House last Wednesday, is backing Mr Redwood and has ordered the Tory ranks in the Commons and the Lords to fall in line.

Lord Parkinson, chairman of the Conservative Party, also appeared uncomfortable when he joined in the attack on the former chairman of BP last week. Lord Parkinson denied he

was joining a "witch hunt" against Lord Simon.

Lord Simon said he had a "thick skin" and will not resign, but the former chairman of BP may feel that in spite of the support he is getting from Tony Blair, the criticism is making his position untenable.

John Bercow, Tory MP for Buckingham, last night wrote to Peter Sutherland, chairman of the compensation committee at BP, questioning Lord Simon's eligibility for his £2m shares.

"My understanding is that it is normal practice for staff who retire or who leave without going to another job to be eligible to participate in such plans."

"However, I did not think that it was normal for staff leaving to take another job still to receive benefits from their former company even if those benefits related to prior years."

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A plastic sheet, and we can read

Lucy Ward reports on a discovery that colour helps children learn

Transparent sheets of coloured plastic laid over books help children to speed up their reading, psychologists say.

The discovery, made during experiments by the Medical Research Council, builds on previous work which revealed that pupils with a reading problem which makes words seem to "wobble" on the page can also be helped to conquer their difficulties using the sheets.

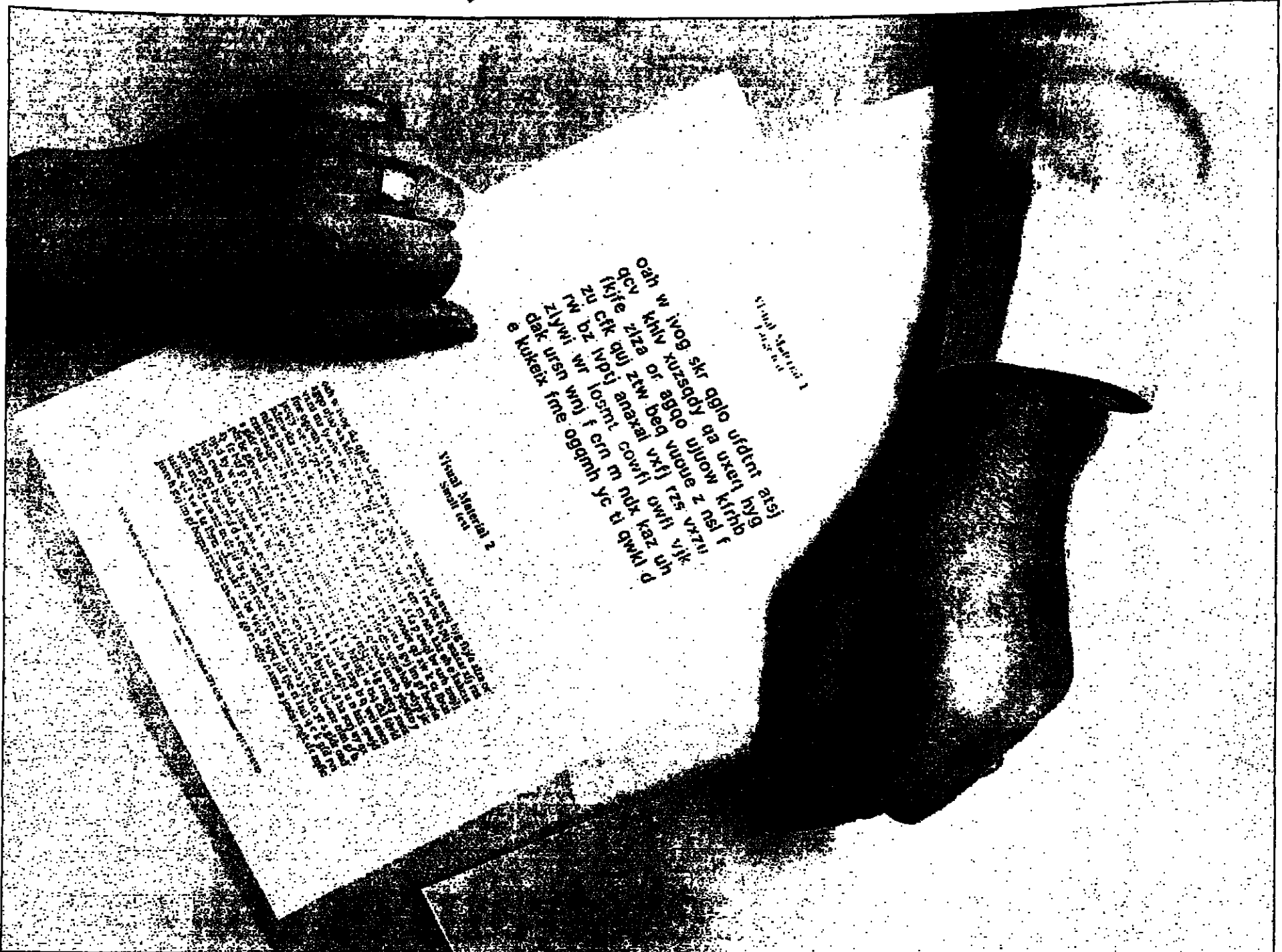
Psychologists from the council's applied psychology unit in Cambridge made the latest breakthrough after testing children in schools in Cambridge and Norfolk.

In 15 Norfolk schools, all the eight-year-olds were asked to choose from a selection of tinted plastic sheets, known as overlays, to see which, if any, made reading clearer and easier. They were then timed as they read a series of random words on a printed card, both with and without the overlays. If they wished, they were permitted to keep the sheets - found to make a difference by more than half the children - and use them while reading in school.

Identical tests given to pupils at the start of the experiment last autumn and in June revealed that around one-fifth were able to read more quickly with the overlay than without. Meanwhile, those in a control group who had seemed to need overlays but had been denied them showed a deterioration in their reading rate. Those who had struggled most with reading were more likely to choose an overlay to help.

The project, headed by Arnold Wilkins of the Cambridge applied psychology unit, was led in Norfolk by David Pointon, head of the county's sensory support service. The results had been "dramatic", Mr Pointon said.

Norfolk already leads the field among local education authorities in using overlays to



Visual aid: Children found that putting tinted sheets over their books helped to keep words still on the page, and enabled them to read faster

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

help children who are experiencing some reading difficulties. Research carried out in New Zealand and the United States prompted the authority six years ago to explore the potential of the coloured sheets. "Children were coming to us and saying

letters moved or jiggled and of course, in common with lots of other people, we were saying 'Are you sure?'. Mr Pointon said. "But then we began to hear more about this research and became less sceptical about it."

Children with a condition known as "visual perception difficulty" see letters appear to move and create stripes and patterns rather than clear text. One boy referred to Mr Pointon described what he saw as "the letters getting up and running round the page".

In Norfolk, pupils suffering serious problems have been given overlays to use over their schoolbooks. If they continue to rely on the sheets, they are sent to an optician to be prescribed glasses with tinted lenses. Researchers are also exam-

ining the role of coloured plastic sheets in tackling migraines. Bruce Evans, of the Institute of Optometry in London, said: "Some people get migraines when light is a trigger and they may also be helped by coloured filters, perhaps in glasses."

He added: "The weird thing about this is different people need different colours and sometimes the colour a person needs can be quite specific. They may need a blue filter but if it's light blue instead of dark it won't help them."

Courses target 'second career' teachers

Adults in search of a second career are being invited to try their hand at teaching during three-day government-funded "taster courses" aimed at combating a classroom recruitment crisis, writes Lucy Ward.

Potential teachers of five subjects facing a serious staff shortage spend a day in school and two days with tutors learning more about the profession.

In the classroom, they may take the register, observe lessons or may be offered the chance to teach briefly under supervision. The scheme, run by London University's Institute of Education, comes shortly after the Government announced proposals for "fast-track" teacher training, in which would-be teachers with some classroom experience can qualify for the profession in three months.

That initiative, prompted by the severe shortfall in some curriculum subjects, was greeted warily by teaching union leaders, who suggested the current year-long postgraduate course was most appropriate for teacher training.

The subjects covered by the taster courses, which are backed by the Teacher Training Agency, are physics and broad science, maths, modern foreign languages, religious education and design and technology.

Candidates applying will take the courses during October and November, and will spend a day in the classroom in one of 170 partner secondary schools approved by the Institute.

They will also learn about recent changes in education, including qualifications and the national curriculum, and study other aspects of a teaching career, such as pastoral work.

Surveys for the TTA revealed a need "to attract more high quality entrants to the teaching profession".

Reports by the schools inspection agency Ofsted have highlighted the need for specialist teachers in RE, and new developments in the subject have increased demand.

Design and technology, also a shortage subject, would benefit from having qualified people to teach with industrial experience to teach at GCSE level, the TTA believes.

Carol Macaskill, head of the institute's initial teacher education section, said the courses might appeal to adults seeking a new career after being made redundant.

"Downsizing in the City and in industry may mean people are looking for a second career," she said. "We are spreading awareness of the possibilities, and trying to give an idea of the possibilities of teaching."

Head of failing school signs up as inspector

Lucy Ward Education Correspondent

The headteacher of a Cambridge primary school which was found to be failing despite educating the children of university academics is to inspect other schools after stepping down from his post.

Martin Lown, who leaves Newnham Croft Primary at the end of this month after 10 years at the school, passed a training course run by the inspection

agency Ofsted and will join teams inspecting primary schools next term.

Parents at Newnham Croft, who include a number of Cambridge University tutors and lecturers, were shocked when a highly critical Ofsted inspection report published in March found that the school was failing to provide its pupils with an acceptable standard of education.

Although pupils were often matching national expectations for their age group, their work

in class was not reflecting their full capabilities, inspectors found. Although reception classes gave children a good start, the atmosphere in classrooms higher up the school did not enable pupils to learn properly.

In infant classes, no work at all was of a high standard, inspectors found. They wrote in their report: "Hardly any work is in line with the expected standard for their age, although pupils' talk indicated that they are articulate and quick on the uptake. Writing and number work is careless and meagre in quality."

Inspectors recommended that the school should improve curriculum planning to ensure all subjects were covered and set out clear goals for each lesson. Some parents had accused the school of refusing to listen to their complaints that their children were progressing too slowly.

As a team inspector, who joined the Ofsted register three years ago, Mr Lown has signed up with agencies who bid

for contracts from Ofsted to inspect primary schools.

To be accepted as a team inspector, teachers or heads have to demonstrate that they have sufficient experience of their subject area or of management of schools, and must provide references. If considered suitably qualified, they must undergo five days of training spread out over up to eight weeks - a process described as rigorous by Ofsted.

Mr Lown said that Newnham

Croft had been through a number of "crises and difficulties, most of which were beyond my control". He had told inspection agencies of the situation and all had told him they were happy to accept him, he said. Only the agency which had sent the team to his own school had declined to add his name to its books, "by mutual agreement".

Since the Newnham Croft inspection, the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, has continued to stress Ofsted's focus on teaching quality and particularly on standards in numeracy and literacy.

However, Mr Woodhead acknowledged last week at a teachers' conference that the service needed to remedy some weaknesses among team inspectors. Some needed more training to ensure that they were qualified to inspect a variety of subjects, while others had been "inhumane" in denying teachers feedback after classroom observation.

need to make cuts. Disagreeing, the judge said the 1996 Community Health Council regulations "were clearly aimed at achieving sufficient time for proper consultation".

If a health authority "could allow time to pass to the point where matters were so urgent that there was no time left for consultation" it would seriously undermine the purpose of the specific regulation which allowed time to avoid consultation in emergency situations.

"It would permit a health authority, taking the view there was only one practicable solution, to pre-empt the result of proper consultation," said the judge, adding that "consultation has been given a low priority by health authorities recently".

The ruling was a victory for local residents dependent on the two hospitals who brought the successful High Court challenge, unofficially estimated to have cost the health authority £15,000-£20,000.

They included Andrea Baylis, from Cardingham, near Bodmin, who was opposing on behalf of her mother, Greta, a decision of North and East Devon HA to instruct North Devon Health NHS Trust to close temporarily in-patient services at Winsford Hospital by 15 August at the latest.

The health authority faces having to go through a six-week consultation period over the proposed closures unless the ruling is overturned as the judge granted leave to appeal.

Stricter rules for treasure hunters offer silver lining

Kim Sengupta

Arts minister Mark Fisher yesterday unveiled new guidelines to codify treasure hunting for the first time in 750 years.

Until now the rules of treasure hunting have been based on common law practices. The new code lays down a series of penalties for those who try to keep their find a secret.

Under the Treasure Act Code of Practice, anyone who fails to disclose their bounty within 14 days faces a maximum sentence of three months imprisonment and a £5,000 fine.

The measures, introduced by the Department of Culture,

Media and Sport, are intended to safeguard treasures for the nation. The Crown now only has a claim to unearthed antiquities if it can prove they are made "substantially of gold or silver", if they are deliberately hidden, or if the owner is not known.

The reforms, which come into effect on 24 September, widen the definition of treasure by removing the need to establish that it was hidden with the intention of recovery. The classification of items which can be considered as treasures is also expanded to include coins more than 300 years old found in hoards; other objects with at least 10 per cent gold or silver

content; objects found in archaeological association with the above; plus any object covered by previous definitions.

A comprehensive system of rewards is also being introduced. Owners of land containing treasure would have to be informed of the find, and would become eligible for cash awards. Finders who inform landowners of their searching would also receive rewards, but those who fail to do so, or who trespass, could find the amount reduced or withheld.

The Government expects the new act will increase its number of treasure hauls from around 25 a year to 200.

Mr Fisher said yesterday: "The Government is fully committed to seizing this opportunity to educate people on the good practices they should adopt when they find objects which might be declared treasures."



Mark Fisher: Good practices

Hospital closures unlawful

A cash-strapped health authority's decision temporarily to close in-patient services at two West Country cottage hospitals to save money was ruled unlawful and blocked by the High Court yesterday.

In what is being seen as a test case which could affect other health authorities, a judge ruled that North and East Devon Health Authority "erred in law" in failing to appreciate at an early stage that the closure proposals had triggered a duty to consult the public.

The judge said the duty arose last April, when it was clear that the threatened closures of Winsford and Lynton hospitals was under consideration.

Health chiefs did not formally decide to go ahead with the clo-

sures until June and then said that there would be no formal consultations with the community health council, or the public, because the cuts had to be made as an emergency measure to save £215,000.

Mr Justice Moses said this was an error which "tainted" the closure decisions. There could be little doubt that by June the need to make savings "to balance the books" was urgent, as earlier estimates of the health authority's deficit had been "too optimistic". The amount had risen to £2.2m.

Philip Engelman, for the health authority, had argued that the decision to discontinue with consultation could not be impugned as "irrational" and unlawful because of the urgent

need to make cuts. Disagreeing, the judge said the 1996 Community Health Council regulations "were clearly aimed at achieving sufficient time for proper consultation".

If a health authority "could allow time to pass to the point where matters were so urgent that there was no time left for consultation" it would seriously undermine the purpose of the specific regulation which allowed time to avoid consultation in emergency situations.

"It would permit a health authority, taking the view there was only one practicable solution, to pre-empt the result of proper consultation," said the judge, adding that "consultation has been given a low priority by health authorities recently".

The ruling was a victory for local residents dependent on the two hospitals who brought the successful High Court challenge, unofficially estimated to have cost the health authority £15,000-£20,000.

They included Andrea Baylis, from Cardingham, near Bodmin, who was opposing on behalf of her mother, Greta, a decision of North and East Devon HA to instruct North Devon Health NHS Trust to close temporarily in-patient services at Winsford Hospital by 15 August at the latest.

The health authority faces having to go through a six-week consultation period over the proposed closures unless the ruling is overturned as the judge granted leave to appeal.

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international

Russia offered nought for its comfort

Yeltsin's new roubles look suspiciously like the old ones, less a few zeros

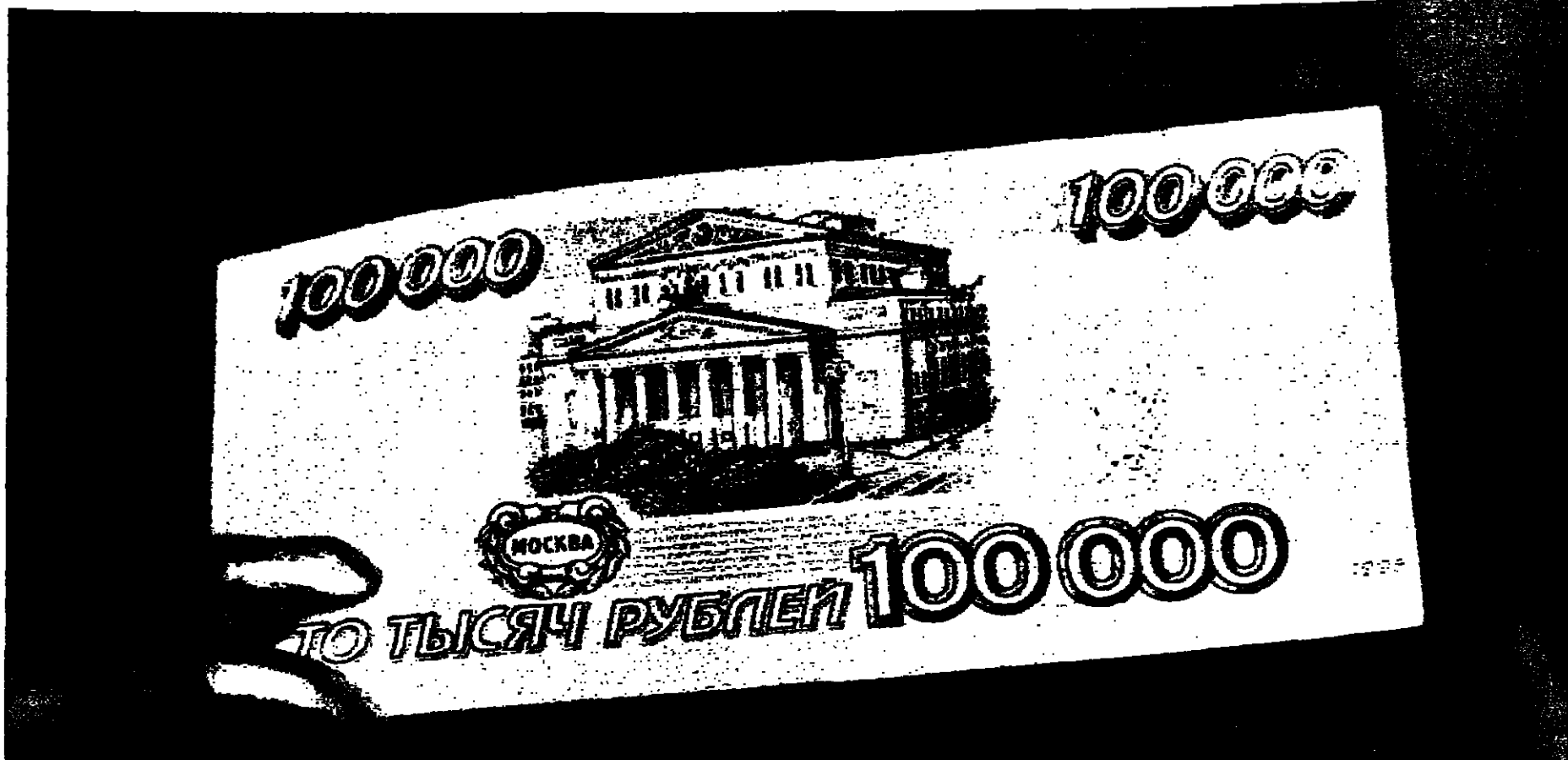
Helen Womack
Moscow

Success in the fight against inflation had made possible a reform which would relieve Russians of the need to carry wads of roubles to make the simplest purchases, President Boris Yeltsin said yesterday.

Showing he had learnt from past mistakes, when such reforms caused panic and amounted to a confiscation of savings, he gave five months' notice of the change and said that even after new rouble notes were introduced on 1 January the old ones would be valid until 2002.

"Today we reliably control money circulation and control inflation," he said in an address to the nation as he ended his summer holiday and prepared to resume work in Moscow today. "The prices of basic goods are practically stable. That is why we made the decision to conduct the money reform." Thanks to a tight budgetary policy on which reformers have insisted and in spite of howls of protest from the Communist opposition, Russia has seen a miracle over inflation, which rocketed when prices were first freed in 1992 until 1996, when it fell to 22 per cent. This year it is 12 per cent.

Under the reform, one new rouble will be worth 1,000 old ones. Until the end of 1998 shoppers can still use old notes, simply knocking off three noughts. For another three full years after that the old notes will be



Cashing in: An old note, to be replaced gradually by 2002, to avert a repeat of the panic which often attended monetary reform in the past

Photograph: Reuters

accepted for exchange by the banks. "Nobody will lose anything as a result of this reform," Mr Yeltsin said. "Nobody's interests will be harmed. This reform will not be a confiscation." Russians have not forgotten the summer of 1993, when the government announced it was withdrawing certain denominations of the rouble and gave the population only a few days to change their money. Pensioners had heart attacks in the

huge queues which built up outside banks and many, unable to make the transaction in time, lost their life's savings.

This time the more competent hands of Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, the new reformers now surrounding Mr Yeltsin, are evident. "We will gradually replace the old money with new," said the President. "The standard unit will be one rouble. It will be easier, more familiar,

without all the extra zeros. New zeros will never again appear on our banknotes."

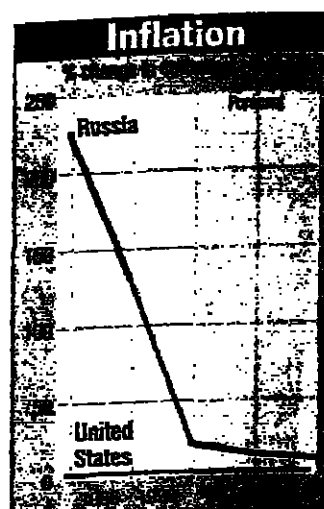
Geoff Winestock, editor of the *Moscow Times* and an expert on the economy, said the reform was largely cosmetic, designed to make Russians feel they had a real currency instead of Monopoly money. At present, they must carry a sackful of cash just to buy bread at 2,500 roubles a loaf or vodka at 18,000; the

rouble has limited convertibility at a rate of 5,800 to one US dollar.

"Everything depends on how the government runs the economy from now on," said Mr Winestock. "After what Mr Yeltsin has said, it will be very embarrassing for them to have to add more zeros to the rouble, so in a sense this is a bit more than a public-relations exercise. It is a way of forcing themselves to be honest."

Overall, the economy is still not

healthy. The pension backlog has been cleared but the government is having to auction state property to meet obligations to the army and the massed ranks of unpaid doctors, teachers and other public workers. Compared with Soviet times, Russian shops are bursting with goods to satisfy the consumer but they are mainly imports. Domestic industry is on its knees and unemployment is far higher than statistics show.



Money madness

The Russian government is by no means the first to try the trick of knocking off a few zeroes, writes Margaret Rogerson. Brazil, Argentina, Yugoslavia and many others confronted with hyperinflation have tried the same tactic. In an effort to curb inflation, the Reichsbank in Weimar Germany issued a new mark - each one worth a trillion old marks - to save Germans from taking a wheelbarrow of money to the shops: in November 1923 a loaf of bread cost over 200 billion marks; a construction worker was paid 3 trillion marks a day. The world's worst inflation occurred in Hungary in 1946 when the 1931 gold pengo was valued at 130 million trillion paper pengos. Notes were issued for "seymilliar billion" - 10 with 21 noughts after it - on 3 June and withdrawn on 11 July.

significant shorts

EU raises stakes in row over Bosnian integration

Britain and its main European partners stepped up pressure for a real peace in Bosnia by suspending contacts with Bosnian embassies, because of the failure of the Muslim-Serb-Croat presidency in Sarajevo to appoint new ambassadors to their capitals. A week after visiting Bosnia to deliver a scolding for slow progress on the Dayton accords, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said he was suspending contact with Mugdim Pasiet, the Bosnian chargé d'affaires in London. He is also refusing to approve a new ambassador, because it has not been cleared by the joint presidency by the 1 August deadline set by Nato foreign ministers in May. Similar steps are being taken by France and Germany. The ministers have set deadlines for new laws on citizenship and passports by 15 August, re-establishment of a joint civil aviation authority by 21 August, and a common flag by 1 September.

Rupert Cornwell - London

India mystifies UK university

A British university said it was surprised to learn an Indian court had ordered it to stop awarding degrees in India - something it has never done. "It's a very strange legal system that can grant an injunction against somebody about something they're not doing," said Vanessa Bridge, spokeswoman for the University of Leeds. Its name cropped up in a temporary court order in Madras seeking to stop foreign schools holding classes, collecting fees or operating in India.

AP - London

SA hit-men granted amnesty

A former South African police hit-squad leader was granted amnesty from prosecution for the murder of an anti-apartheid lawyer, Dirk Coetzee and two accomplices, David Tshikalanga and Almond Nofomela, were granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the stabbing of the lawyer Griffiths Mxenge in 1981. The commission said they had acted on orders of senior officers.

Reuters - Johannesburg

German flood bombshell

German soldiers reinforcing dikes along the Oder river had to remove four Second World War bombs. The find halted construction of a levee between the weakened main dike at Reitwein.

AP - Frankfurt am der Oder

Oldest person, 122, dies

Jeanne Calment, who credited olive oil and port for making her the world's oldest person, died aged 122 in Arles. Though blind, nearly deaf and in a wheelchair, she remained spirited and mentally sharp to the end. On her 121st birthday she released a CD, *Time's Mistress*, on which she reminded to rap.

AP - Arles

Obituary, page 10

French feel strain of colonial legacy

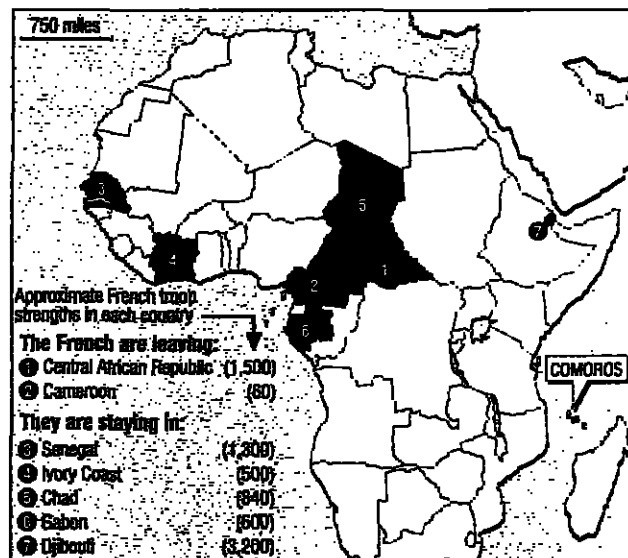
Military presence reduced in Africa

Paris - The French government confirmed yesterday that it intended to reduce and rationalise its military presence in Africa, writes John Lichfield.

Alain Richard, the minister of defence, returning from a three-nation African tour, said the permanent French commitment would be reduced from seven bases to five and from 8,100 men to 6,000.

The previous centre-right government had been considering a similar retrenchment, partly for financial reasons but also as part of a less interventionist approach to the politics of its former colonies.

There has been speculation that the new Socialist-led government wanted to go further and faster, provoking arguments with President Jacques Chirac. But Mr Richard told the newspaper *Libération* yesterday that the changes had the "full agree-



ment" of the President.

He said the intention was to increase the mobility of the French troops available for African operations, allowing France to "do the same with less". The five main bases would be in Senegal, Gabon, Chad, Ivory Coast and in Djibouti (partly covering the Middle East). Bases in Cameroon and Central Africa would close, but a small contingent could remain at the airport at Bangui, the Central African capital, to maintain a bridgehead for possible future French

operations. Although this is far from a complete abandonment of France's political and military role in Africa, it does reflect a new approach and a recognition of new realities.

Mr Richard hinted, without stating directly, that previous French policy had been based on a willingness to take sides in internal political quarrels.

In future, he said, the intention would be to come to the aid of threatened French citizens, to help "stabilise" Africa but not to "arbitrate between rival forces".

John Lichfield
Paris

After 21 years of independence, the tiny Indian Ocean island of Anjouan, has had enough. It wants, once again, to be part of France and, especially, part of the French welfare system.

More than 7,000 people marched through the capital at the weekend carrying the tricolour and a portrait of President Jacques Chirac. After throwing a few stones at the gendarmerie headquarters, their leaders declared independence from the Comoros group and begged Paris to "bear their cries of distress".

The Comoros government dismissed their pleas but so did France. Paris maintains excellent relations with most of its former colonies and does not want to encourage the disintegration of former colonial boundaries. It is unlikely to want to take over responsibility for an impoverished, overcrowded island (250,000 people in an area the size of the Isle of Wight, with an annual average income per head of about £300).

The inhabitants - Les Anjouanais - look enviously at the similar-sized island of Mayotte, 60 miles to the south-east, which refused independence in a referendum in 1974. Mayotte, as part of France, has a

Islanders beg Paris to take them back

higher standard of living, free education, a minimum wage, family allowances and social security. The separatists say Anjouan has been "ignored and humiliated" in the last two decades by successive regimes in the capital Moroni, on the Grand Comoro island, to the north-west.

The dispute sounds like the plot for an Evelyn Waugh novel. But it has its darker side. Although the weekend protest passed off without injury, Comoran soldiers fired on a similar demonstration in March, killing one person and injuring a dozen. There were also violent confrontations, leading to two deaths, when thousands of Anjouanais poured onto the streets on 14 July to celebrate the French national day. Inhabitants of the third, and smallest, inhabited island in the group, Moheli, have also started to agitate to be returned to France.

The French foreign ministry

has made it clear that it has no interest in regaining these scraps of empire, formerly separate Arab-controlled emirates, annexed by France in 1912. France, the ministry said, remains committed to the "territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of the Comoros. It hopes that, in this internal Comoran affair, a spirit of negotiation will prevail".

The President of the Comoros, Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim, has recently taken a conciliatory line, offering the smaller islands greater autonomy and an opportunity to draw up a short-list from which their governors would be chosen. But the Andoujan revolt, led by Abdallah Ibrahim, 71, has gathered considerable popular support in the last four months.

In the referendum held on the islands in December 1974, Andoujan voted overwhelmingly for independence as part of the Comoros Republic. The count was 99.92 per cent in favour of separation from France, with only 44 voters against. Mayotte, with a population of only 94,000, voted 64 per cent to remain as a French territory. Since then, Mr Ibrahim claims, the smaller islands have been starved of whatever economic developments have occurred in the coup-haunted Comoros.

Civilians fall casualty to shattered truce

Robert Fisk
Beirut

It was accompanied by all the usual clichés. An operation of "surgical precision", every care taken for civilian life, "well within the parameters of the April [1996] truce" understanding.

That is how the commander of the Golani Brigade put it yesterday after his men had returned from their fight at the small Lebanese village of Kfour, north of their occupation zone. And it is true that at least five Hizbol-

lah guerrillas were killed and another two wounded.

Unfortunately for the mangled south Lebanese ceasefire, however, three civilians were wounded in Kfour and the fighting took place around the village; the wounding of civilians and firing into villages are both banned under the terms of the ceasefire agreement.

A pitched battle had begun in the early hours after Israeli troops had been flown by helicopter to a location close to Kfour and encountered both Lebanese army troops and Hizbollah

men. When they retreated back to their helicopters, the Israelis laid booby-trap mines behind them - into which the five Hizbollah men blithely walked once the Israelis had flown away.

In military terms, it was indeed a coup for the Israelis. The Hizbollah have been exacting a fearful toll on Israeli occupation soldiers inside Lebanon and the dead included Hussein Kassir, the local Hizbollah commander. He and his guerrillas, according to Colonel Erez, the Golani commander, had "Golani blood on

their hands". Which may be true. But it is now only a matter of time before a further attack will be made on Golani soldiers in Lebanon now that they have obligingly let the Hizbollah know which Israeli unit to revenge themselves upon. The Lebanese authorities are already drafting their next complaint to the five-power ceasefire committee - whose chairmen have been pleading for more restraint in southern Lebanon - and the truce is just a little more tattered.

Israel arrested 29 Palestinians early

yesterday in a sweep of the West Bank, as part of a strike to weaken Islamic militants after a twin suicide bombing took 15 lives in Jerusalem last week. Israel also stepped up demolition of houses built without permits by east Jerusalem Arabs, raising four, AP reports.

Since Wednesday's bombing, Israel has arrested 145 Palestinians, imposed tight travel restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and suspended talks with the Palestinians that had just resumed after a four-month break.

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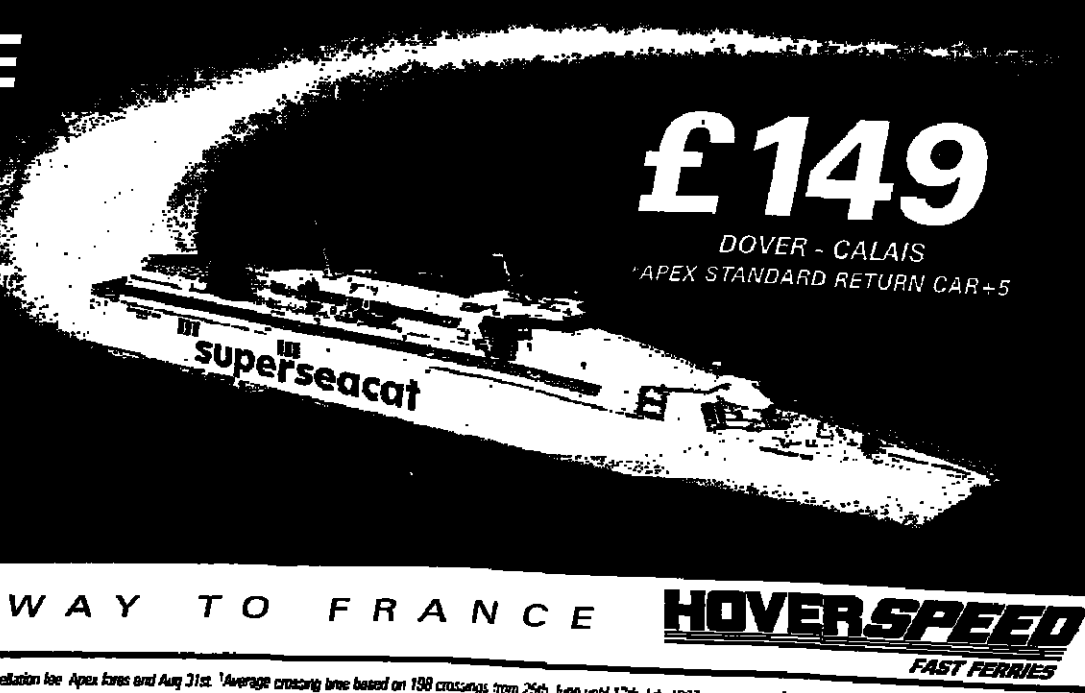
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Ed O'Loughlin reports from Gulu on a crusade orchestrated by a former Catholic altar boy



Holy terrors: The Lord's Resistance Army has murdered thousands of civilians. Oyet Lakweka, 18, (centre back) owns up to the massacre of 200 Photograph: Ed O'Loughlin

Brainwashed children of God blaze trail of murder and mayhem in Uganda

For the past five years, the people of northern Uganda have lived in terror of a strange and bloody children's crusade.

Led by a 34-year-old former Catholic altar boy called Joseph Kony, the army of abducted and brainwashed children that calls itself the Lord's Resistance Army has murdered thousands of civilians and devastated much of the north.

Their aim is to overthrow President Yoweri Museveni's government and rule Uganda in accordance with the Ten Commandments.

Since the insurgency flared four years ago, the authorities in Gulu district say the LRA has murdered 5,000 people and perhaps as many again in neighbouring Kitgum.

They believe 230,000 people have been displaced into protected camps, while the UN World Food Programme reports that war and drought are forcing it to feed 140,000 people in the region.

In addition to those killed, aid workers say hundreds—perhaps thousands—more have been attacked and mutilated for disobeying Kony's decrees.

Anybody caught riding a bicycle—the main transport in this remote region—is likely to be killed or have their feet hacked off. Those who speak ill of the rebels have had lips or noses cut off.

More recently, Kony declared pigs will not be tolerated and that Friday should be a second Sabbath. His enemies say this is a concession to his main backer, the fundamentalist Islamic government of neighbouring Sudan.

The deepest religious influence on Kony, many suspect, is neither Christianity nor Islam, but witchcraft.

Before they acquired large quantities of modern infantry weaponry in the past four years, (Uganda's government accuses Sudan of supplying them),

many LRA soldiers went into action armed only with stones and machetes, smearing themselves with ointments that Kony said would render them bullet-proof.

He also ordered that all white livestock and chickens in rebel areas be slaughtered, along with anyone harbouring them.

Survivors of his base camps in southern Sudan say he often explains his orders by saying that "the Holy Spirit told me to do it".

Last week Oyet Lakweka, who claims to be 18 and a lieutenant in the rebel army, admitted having killed "many many people" since being abducted from his village, including about 200 massacred at Atok, in Gulu district, in April 1995.

His field commander had told him an angel ordered the massacre. Lakweka was one of 18 children and rebel fighters captured or freed by the Ugandan army in the Gulu-Kitgum region last week.

The youngest, Simon Ocan, said he was 13 and had killed two people. The first was a soldier of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, which, with

Uganda's aid, is fighting a war against the Khartoum government in southern Sudan.

The second was another child who tried to escape the LRA after they were both abducted. As a new "recruit", Simon had been ordered to help beat him to death.

For an instant his impressive face contorted: "I was sorry for that."

A recent report from the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) estimates up to 8,000 Ugandan children have been abducted by the LRA and taken to southern Sudan.

Those abducted are routinely ordered, on pain of death, to kill others guilty of breaching discipline.

Sometimes they are ordered to carry out atrocities against their own families. Young girls are forced to act as "wives" for older commanders.

The World Vision charity says that since March 1995 its trauma counselling centre in Gulu has cared for 3,000 children who escaped or were captured by the Ugandan army.

The Ugandan government has promised an amnesty for all but the most senior LRA leaders, with whom it now refuses to negotiate.

The irony is that Kony draws both his killers and his victims from his own tribe, the Acholis. These were among the northern tribes which controlled Uganda from independence in 1962 until 1986, when Mr Museveni's National Resistance Army, composed mainly of southerners and westerners, took power.

The NRA's victory ended years of slaughter that cost hundreds of thousands of lives under Idi Amin, Milton Obote and Tito Okello, but many Acholi feared they would lose influence under the new order.

In 1987 thousands joined the "Holy Spirit Movement" of Alice Lakwena, an Acholi faith-healer whose supporters marched on Kampala armed principally with prayers and magic charms.

They were half-way there before Mr Museveni's men established that holy oil did not repel small-arms fire.

After Lakwena fled to Kenya, Kony, a young peasant with a reputation for delinquency and oratory, emerged as leader of a fresh Acholi resistance movement. Linking up with remnants of the old Acholi-dominated army, he gained new contacts among Acholi exile communities in Britain and North America, and with the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Khartoum, keen to avenge itself for Mr Museveni's support of the SPLA rebels in southern Sudan.

says, by awareness that the LRA's crusade is directed against its own people.

Foreign aid workers in the region say that the guerrillas depend more on fear than support. The army says only around 400 LRA guerrillas now remain in Uganda, and even these are running short of ammunition.

Colonel Kazini claims to have killed 57 of these in July alone, while another 45 deserted or were captured.

"If the SPLA captures Juba (capital of southern Sudan) then the LRA will vanish entirely," he says.

But this is not the first time the authorities have proclaimed the LRA's demise. "From what we hear they still seem to be well-organised," said the representative of an aid agency operating in Gulu and Kitgum. "I don't think they've finished yet."

He is confident that the LRA's days are now numbered — Acholi hostility to Mr Museveni is counterbalanced, he

Korean foes jaw in bid to end war

Richard Lloyd Parry
Tokyo

On paper, but only on paper, it looks like a momentous occasion. This morning in New York, for the first time since it fizzled to an inconclusive end in 1953, the four principal combatants in the Korean War will sit around a single table and talk about peace. The talks, between North and South Korea, plus China and the US, have been the object of diplomatic toil since spring, when they were suggested by President Bill Clinton and President Kim Young Sam of South Korea.

The tag-line for the meetings is that they will eventually restore peace to Korea for the first time since the 1950-53 war, which ended in a ceasefire rather than a permanent treaty.

But nobody's expecting to hoist the bunting for a long time yet. The initial goals are so modest as to appear fooling: military exchanges between the rival armies, advance notification of exercises and crisis hotlines. The US hopes to bring peace to Korea by offering Pyongyang supplies of fertiliser. Officials speak of offering their expertise in reforesting the mountains of the North.

But it turns out we have not even got that far. These subjects will be raised at the talks themselves, but today's meeting at Columbia University is only a talk about talks.

That the Koreans are sitting down to talk to one another is achievement enough, especially in company with the North's Korean War sponsor, China. But the modesty of the agenda

emphasises how many diplomatic leagues there are to cross before any settlement is reached and how alarmingly isolated Pyongyang has become. There are few pointers on this road to peace and the one obvious precedent — reunification of East and West Germany — offers more differences than similarities.

Through television and radio, East Germany had been bathed in Western brand names and aspirations for years. In Korea, communication is almost non-existent. This is as much a consequence of Seoul's paranoia as Pyongyang's totalitarianism.

The only way out of North Korea is defection, but South Koreans who visit the North without permission are also imprisoned, and forbidden from phone, fax or postal communication.

South Korean engineers will soon make an unprecedented official journey to the North to install nuclear reactors to replace ones suspected of contributing to nuclear weapons. Yesterday special phone lines were opened for them to contact their families.

Given such mistrust, confidence-building measures are simply a humble recognition of political realities. "Just because they may have very low expectations for these talks, the talks can succeed in spite of it," a US official said in Washington.

"You can't rule out results before you begin."

With time, it is hoped, they will lead to closer contact, although, with a worsening food crisis, it is unclear how much time North Korea has left.

'You can't rule out results before you begin'

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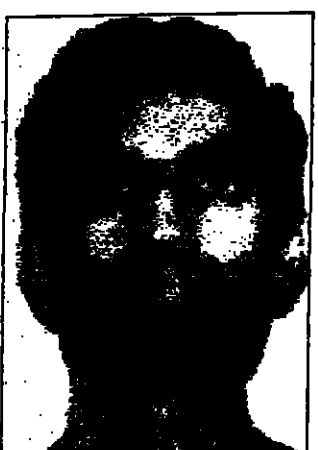
Terrorism without a cause baffles the FBI

John Carlin
Washington

A terrorist act is, by definition, political, but when a bomb goes off in the United States, or a bomb conspiracy is uncovered, the authorities do not appear to know exactly who is behind it or why.

Initial police reports last Thursday said that two Palestinians arrested on suspicion of plotting to bomb the New York subway belonged to Hamas. Now Federal Bureau of Investigation and White House officials are saying they have no reason to believe the two men are connected to Hamas or any other Middle Eastern group. More perplexingly, US authorities do not yet know the political identity of those responsible for the blast at New York's World Trade Centre four ago, which killed six people and injured more than 1,000.

The trial was expected to begin yesterday in Manhattan of Ramzi Yousef, who is accused of having been the mastermind



Mystery figure: Ramzi Yousef, was due to stand trial yesterday for masterminding the 1993 bomb at the World Trade Centre

behind the World Trade Centre blast. But not only do prosecutors have no idea whether Mr Yousef belongs to any terrorist organisation, they do not even know what nationality he is.

The timing of last week's suspected plot appears so far to be the only clue suggesting Hamas might be targeting New York. Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer and Lafi Khalil were arrested in a Brooklyn apartment, allegedly in possession of a batch of pipe bombs, only 24 hours after the suicide bombing in Jerusalem which killed 15 people and for which Hamas did claim responsibility.

The FBI are also exploring the hypothesis that Mr Mezer and Mr Khalil might have intended their alleged bombing plans to coincide with the start of Mr Yousef's trial, indicating that he is also a member of Hamas.

For now, the evidence appears just as strong, however, that Mr Abu Mezer and Mr Khalil were acting on their own. Hamas released a statement at the weekend denying any connection with the two arrested

Palestinians. "Hamas does not consider the American people an enemy and it does not target any of its communities," it said.

According to relatives of Mr Abu Mezer and Mr Khalil, it was laughably off the mark to suggest the two men belonged to Hamas. Their involvement in the Palestinian cause was said to be minimal and neither was particularly religious.

The FBI have not ruled out the possibility that the two, who are in their early twenties, are freelance fanatics in the manner of the US's home-grown Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh. And the FBI still do not know who planted the bomb in Atlanta during the Olympic Games a year ago, much less what their agenda might have been.

■ New York (Reuters) — Opening arguments in the trial of the accused mastermind of the World Trade Centre bombing were postponed yesterday due to the illness of one juror and the dismissal of an alternate juror. The judge said the opening arguments would begin today.

obituaries / gazette

Sviatoslav Richter

Sviatoslav Richter was a connoisseur's pianist, a supreme lyric poet of the keyboard for whom the piano was an extension of his own body and mind and a means to musical thought that was devoted to the composer in question.

Richter was not a virtuoso in the flamboyant sense of parading his talent to dazzle an audience; instead he required from his listeners an act of intense concentration to match his own incomparable approach to the music. Those who could not summon this were apt to grow restless during his performances, although even they might realise that they were hearing something exceptional.

His interpretations were more a matter of re-creation than reproduction, so that no two performances of the same work were likely to be identical. His repertoire ranged from Bach, played with a clarity of insight into the music's structure and content, to Prokofiev, with whom he had a close association after giving the premiere of the composer's Sixth Sonata in 1942, and later of the Seventh and Ninth Sonatas, the latter of which is dedicated to him. He also made a single conducting appearance in the premiere of Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in 1952, with Mstislav Rostropovich as soloist.

Richter was born at Zhitomir in Ukraine, where his father was a pianist, organist and teacher, and a composer in a small way. The Richters were of combined Polish and German extraction, and soon after the boy's birth they moved to

Odessa, a city where other musical reputations of distinction were fostered, including that of David Oistrakh, and where Igor Oistrakh, Emil Gilels and Nathan Milstein were all born, and later studied. Having absorbed the rudiments of music from his father, Richter was largely self-taught at the piano, except for some lessons from one of his father's pupils, and quickly showed unusual early facility in keyboard technique.

Although never a child prodigy in the accepted sense, Richter began to compose at the age of eight, and reportedly wrote an opera before his teen years. He certainly became adept at playing from orchestral scores, which took him, in 1930, when he was 15, to the Odessa Opera as a répétiteur. A few years later, in 1934, he gave his first solo recital, and the experience was so successful, and pleasing to him that he abandoned thoughts of conducting to concentrate on a pianistic career. To that end he took himself to the Moscow Conservatoire as a student of the famous teacher Heinrich Neuhaus.

Neuhaus found his new pupil "already a complete artist", with the ability to build a piece "so that it seemed to lie before him like an immense landscape, revealed to the eye at a single glance". This visionary sense of what was comprised in a complete music work pervaded all his later performances, from the time he gave his first Prokofiev premiere while still a student. Shortly before that, his father fell victim to one of the Stalinist purges and his mother sought refuge in Germany,

not to see her son again until she was flown to New York for his debut there nearly 20 years later.

Richter's early appearances were confined by the authorities to the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, whence occasional Western visitors who were fortunate to catch one of his concerts brought back travellers' tales of his exceptional talent. These tales were reinforced by an early recording of Schumann which circulated in the West. Richter was consequently already something of a legend by the time he came himself to the West in 1960, first to Helsinki, Chicago and New York, and the next year to sold-out houses at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

Here his debut programme was typically uncompromising, beginning with a small Haydn sonata, but with the rest entirely devoted to Prokofiev, including the encores. In that year Richter published in Moscow a book of reminiscences of Prokofiev, whose entire piano works he had committed to memory and whom he continued to champion persistently.

Richter also became admired for his playing of Chopin and Schubert, whose duet music he played, with Benjamin Britten as his partner, at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1965. Preferring the ambience of smaller festivals like this, he began the previous year an association with the Fêtes Musicales at Grange de Meslay, near Tours in France.

A fastidious, not to say prickly performer, he was acutely sensitive to the hori-

zontal plane of the keyboard, sometimes requiring it to be checked with a spirit level, especially in a recording studio. He liked to record at night, from about nine o'clock until he was tired, usually around three in the morning, so as to have no distraction from meal breaks. He preferred to make long "takes" of complete movements or sections, going right back to the beginning if something displeased him. We now have a legacy of over 130 CDs by him in the current lists to testify to the power of his intellect and command of artistry.

When he returned to London in 1989 after a 12-year absence, it was noted that he played from music in front of him illuminated by a single lamp he operated himself. Three years later, he took space in the printed programme to explain his reasons, dismissing memory playing as "a childish and vain feat", and saying of the absence of platform lighting, "We are living in an age of voyeurs and nothing is more fatal for music."

He enjoyed chamber-music playing as a pianist with the Borodin Quartet and others, and accompanied distinguished singers including Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, as well as his own wife, Nina Dorliak, a professor at the Moscow Conservatoire.

Noël Goodwin

Sviatoslav Teofilovich Richter, pianist; born Zhitomir, Ukraine 20 March 1915; married 1946 Nina Dorliak; died Moscow 1 August 1997.



Richter: 'We are living in an age of voyeurs'

Photograph: Camera Press

Sir Hepi te Heuheu

Sir Hepi te Heuheu was the last paramount chief of a Maori tribe and his mana and standing ranked with that of the Maori Queen, Dame Te Atairangi-ikaahu. He could have been in the line of succession to be the Maori King, but his great-grandfather, who was a prime candidate to be the first holder of that position, declined to challenge, instead rallying his Tuharetoa people behind the Waikato chief Potatau Te Wherowhero, establishing royal succession with the 'taniwha' tribe.

One of the most influential figures in Maoridom, which has long been handicapped by jealousies and rivalries between the tribes, te Heuheu transcended tribal boundaries and was respected by Maoris and *pakeha* (Europeans) from all walks of life. Known as 'The Mountain', he was one of the few leaders whose words and dignity held sway throughout Maoridom, commanding respect from fellow tribal aristocrats and militant radicals alike.

He was largely responsible for creating the Maori Congress, a pan-tribal body set up to provide a single voice on Maori issues. In 1984, he acted as a mediator between leaders of an angry march by protesters about Maori land claims and the Governor-General. Te Heuheu won the Governor-General's agreement to meet a deputation of the marchers, but police, concerned about the Governor-General's security, refused to allow the meeting to take place.

Knighted in 1979, te Heuheu was trusted and honoured by successive governments, even though, unlike some fellow Maori leaders, he declined allegiance to any political party. Maoris saw his independent stance as being in the tradition of his ancestor, te Heuheu Tikino II, who refused to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, in which Maori chiefs ceded sovereignty to Queen Victoria in 1840.

All New Zealanders witnessed the power of his mana in 1994 when he quietly declined the Prime Minister's invitation to attend a meeting to launch the so-called "fiscal envelope" policy under which the government proposed to put aside a maximum of NZ\$1bn to settle all Maori claims for the return of, or compensation for, confiscated land. His refusal was seen as a direct rejection of the controversial policy by all Maoris. The following year, he called a meeting to discuss the policy which attracted more than 1,000 Maori representatives from all tribes.

He spent his early life as a bushman before farming family land near Taumarunui in the central North Island. He was only 24 when he assumed the mantle of paramount chief of the Ngati Tuharetoa tribe from his father, his first chiefly task being to lead tribal members to Wellington to welcome home soldiers returning from Second World War service.

He served as chairman of numerous Maori trusts and was a member of the Tongariro National Park Board, the country's first national park established on land gifted to the nation by his great-grandfather in 1887.

An ardent advocate of racial harmony, he deplored the failure of Europeans and Maoris to settle their differences and reportedly said "We must keep talking" on his deathbed.

David Barber

Hepi Hoani te Heuheu: born 1919; paramount chief, Ngati Tuharetoa tribe 1953-97; KBE 1979; married Pauline Hingopu (née children); died Taupo, New Zealand 31 July 1997.

Bao Dai

Annam was regarded as an exotic backwater in French Indo-China when Bao Dai, who has just died in Paris, ascended the imperial throne in Hué in 1925. Little could he have imagined at the time that within a few years, his country, together with the rest of Vietnam, was to become engulfed in a long series of wars. He was just a boy of 12 who had been summoned home from school in France to perform the many elaborate rites which accompanied the installation of an Emperor of Annam.

On the advice of his French mentors, Bao Dai (the title, meaning "Keeper of Greatness", was given to him on his enthronement) then returned to Paris to complete his education. Apart from the usual academic subjects, he also learnt riding, tennis, how to drive a car and play poker. These pursuits were later to earn him the reputation of being a playboy monarch. Yet the life style to which the French had introduced him differed little from that of other fashionable young men of noble birth during the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed he was proud of being the first Emperor of the Nguyen dynasty which had ruled Annam since 1802, to have a modern upbringing instead of being constricted by the ancient rites imposed by the court mandarins.

In 1932, therefore, when at the age of 19 Bao Dai returned to his native Hué to assume his royal duties, he sought to introduce some changes to court procedure. Likewise he was eager to see some alleviation of French tutelage over his realm. These hopes proved to be largely in vain. The one small victory he did achieve was the right to choose his own wife rather than enter into an arranged marriage. His choice fell on a young Catholic girl from the south of Vietnam, then known

as Cochin-China, who had been educated by French nuns. The fact that she was not Annamese and of royal birth caused shock and consternation in traditional circles. Nevertheless she was duly installed with full court ritual as the Empress Nam Phuong and during the course of the next few years gave birth to two sons and two daughters.

As for Bao Dai, since he could play little more than a ceremonial role in governing Annam, which was still subject to French domination, he devoted himself increasingly to enjoying his private life, which extended to long hunting expeditions in the mountains bordering on Laos and Cambodia. There at least he could escape from the burden of court ritual to a certain degree and, as he stated in his autobiography, *Le Dragon d'Annam* (1980), see something of his people rather than rows of backs bent in full prostration.

The outbreak of war in the Pacific in 1941 brought few changes to life in Annam. Unlike the rest of South East Asia where the Japanese brought an end to colonial rule and interned all Europeans, in Indo-China they concluded an agreement with the French to continue administering the territory on condition that Japan would be allowed to station some troops there. As the war progressed this Japanese presence attracted some Allied bombing raids but not in Annam where there were no targets of any significance. Bao Dai was therefore able to continue his life undisturbed until March 1945.

By then Paris had been liberated and the French in Indo-China realising that they were likely to be branded as traitors for having collaborated with the Japanese, began making preparations to welcome an Allied in-



Bao Dai: 'I would rather live as an ordinary citizen of an independent country than be Emperor of a nation of slaves'

vasion force. This prompted the Japanese to stage a military coup to oust the French administration throughout Indo-China, including Annam. Bao Dai was all the more astonished when on 10 March 1945, a Japanese diplomat paid an official call upon him at the imperial palace in Hué with an invitation for him to proclaim independence for the whole of Vietnam, albeit with a proviso

that the country maintain good relations with Tokyo.

A royal edict to this effect was issued the following day. The Emperor then proceeded to invite prominent dignitaries from all over Vietnam to form its first independent government. But other Vietnamese had different ideas about the country's future.

In 1941, the Communist Party under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and keeping its identity well concealed had launched a movement calling itself the Viet Minh, appealing to all Vietnamese to struggle for the liberation of their country from both Japanese and French domination. This movement was largely confined to the northern mountains bordering China until March 1945, when the French administration was ousted and its troops disarmed by the Japanese. Seizing this opportunity, Viet Minh guerrillas began moving south and spreading their network of contacts throughout the country.

These moves were scarcely under way when Japan suddenly announced its surrender to the Allied powers on 15 August. This prompted the Viet Minh to stage an uprising in Hanoi and send envoys to Hué to demand that the Emperor abdicate in favour of Ho Chi Minh as President of a new state called the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In the circumstances, although he knew little about the Viet Minh, or for that matter, Ho Chi Minh, Bao Dai felt he had no option but to comply. Accordingly he issued a statement announcing his abdication on 25 August. It included his most famous words: "I would rather live as an ordinary citizen of an independent country than be Emperor of a nation of slaves."

Afterwards the ex-Emperor, reverting to the name of Vinh

Thuy which he was given at birth, made his way to Hanoi at the invitation of Ho Chi Minh to become a special adviser to the new republic. He was accorded a courteous welcome but found his duties less than onerous until in early 1946 he was assigned to head an official mission to Chungking, then the capital of China under President Chiang Kai-shek.

Realising this was a pretext to get him out of Vietnam, Bao Dai declined to return and retired to live in Hong Kong. There he watched from afar as the French returned to Vietnam, tried to reach an agreement with Ho Chi Minh and, when these efforts failed, embarked on full-scale war. He then began to receive feelers from various Vietnamese politicians opposed to the Viet Minh as well as from the French about heading a new State of Vietnam.

Since Bao Dai had no wish to be seen as a French puppet, these negotiations were very protracted. In June 1948 he agreed to be flown in a French seaplane to a warship anchored in the picturesque Gulf of Ha Long in northern Vietnam to witness the signing of a document whereby France conceded a measure of independence. He then went on to Paris for further discussions which eventually culminated on 8 March 1949 at the Elysée Palace, where a series of agreements were concluded, leading to the establishment of the State of Vietnam headed by Bao Dai, although no longer as an Emperor with special royal privileges.

To symbolise his new authority, he immediately flew back to Vietnam to tour the country from Saigon to Hanoi including of course a visit to Hué, his former imperial capital, where the court had been disbanded. He also presided

over the establishment of a new government with ministers from all over Vietnam as well as holding discussions with French generals who were still battling against the Viet Minh, about setting up a Vietnamese National Army to join in the fight.

Bao Dai then had the satisfaction of seeing the State of Vietnam being accorded diplomatic recognition as an independent country by the Western powers at the end of 1949. A couple of months later, however, Ho Chi Minh, who had been living as a guerrilla in the northern mountains, made a secret visit to Peking and Moscow where he managed to secure Chinese and Soviet recognition for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. That set the scene for the next stage in the war.

During the next four years, Bao Dai chose to spend most of his time in France where his children were being educated and where too he could keep a closer eye on the developing international situation. When he did visit Vietnam, it was usually to stay at his villa in the mountain resort of Dalat from where he could once more engage in his favourite sport of hunting.

Meanwhile, with Chinese military aid the Viet Minh were building up their strength in the north of the country. The climax came in May 1954 when after a 57-day siege the Viet Minh succeeded in overwhelming the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Fortunately this occurred on the eve of the opening of a major international conference in Geneva on the future of Indo-China at which Bao Dai played only a backstage role. It resulted amongst other things in an agreement for France to withdraw totally from Indo-China and for Vietnam to be temporarily partitioned between the State of Vietnam in the

south and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north.

At the same time Bao Dai was persuaded, largely as a result of American pressure behind the scenes that the best person to head a strongly anti-Communist government in Saigon was Ngo Dinh Diem, a former mandarin from the court in Hué. That did not endear him to the former Emperor. The feeling was mutual. In 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem staged a referendum throughout the State of Vietnam to decide whether it should become a republic with himself as President. With Bao Dai absent in France and refusing to campaign, the result was unsurprisingly in the affirmative.

That marked the end of Bao Dai's official career. Since 1955, although he undoubtedly followed developments in Vietnam closely, he rarely commented on them. Nor did he live as a rich foreign exile. The villa which he occupied in Cannes during the early 1950s was the property of the State of Vietnam. Instead, until his death, he lived in a modest flat in Paris on a French state pension with the occasional donation from Vietnamese living abroad to finance a few foreign trips.

Some members of the extended Annamese royal family were hoping that he would emulate the example of King Sihanouk of Cambodia and try to regain his throne. Bao Dai was however a very different character and his direct heirs appear to be content with their life in Western Europe.

Judy Stowe

Nguyen Vinh Thuy: born Hué, Annam 22 October 1913; succeeded 1925 as Emperor of Annam, taking the title Bao Dai, abdicated 1945; married 1933 Marie-Thérèse Nguyen Huu Hao (died 1963; two sons, two daughters); died Paris 31 July 1997.

Jeanne Calment

She was born a year before the Battle of the Little Bighorn and lived to be a star (perhaps unwittingly) of rap music and the Internet. The death yesterday in Arles of Jeanne Calment, at the age of 122, deprived humanity of its oldest known member.

She had lived in Arles all her life and had met, as a young woman, an obscure painter called Vincent Van Gogh (before he lost his ear). He was, she recalled in one of her many media interviews of recent years, "as ugly as a house" and "he stank". Calment remained mentally

acute, even playful, almost to the end. "I only ever had one wrinkle and I'm sitting on it," she once said. The one thing she never seemed able to explain satisfactorily was why she lived so long, outliving her husband by more than half a century and even, tragically, her only grandson by 34 years. She put her longevity down to a large consumption of olive oil, but that explanation never seemed to satisfy her increasingly large number of media admirers. It was only in 1995, at the age of 120, that she was persuaded by

her doctor to give up smoking and her Sunday glass of port.

In recent years Calment became a public property to a degree that was disturbing, although it never seemed to worry her. "One hundred and twenty-two years? Can anyone beat that?" she asked a reporter from *Le Figaro* at her last birthday in February.

Last year she was made the star of a four-track compact disc, *Time's Mistress*, in which she told the story of her life over a musical background ranging from rap to baroque. She was

shown (allegedly) how to work a computer and helped to set up her own website on the Internet.

It was these unlikely events which prompted a regional court to place her under its guardianship to protect her "from the problems that fame can bring".

Jeanne Calment spent the first 115 or so years of her life in almost complete obscurity and, by her own account, contentment. She was born into a well-off family in Arles on 21 February 1875. She was married at the age of 21 to a cousin, Fer-

nand Calment. They had one daughter and a grandson, who died in a road accident in 1963.

Until 1985 - when she was 110 - Calment lived alone, looking after herself, in her apartment in the centre of Arles. In 1965, a local lawyer purchased her home (she was then 90) on the understanding that it would remain hers for life. The price was 2,500 francs a month until she died. The lawyer himself died two years ago, aged 77.

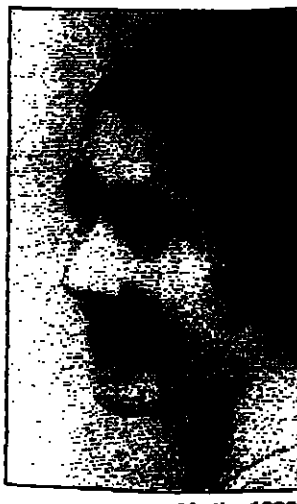
She was recognised in 1993 by the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest member of the hu-

man race who could properly authenticate her birthdate. In October 1995, she became the oldest person ever recorded.

At her last birthday in February, Jeanne Calment, by then blind and almost deaf, was asked if she wanted to go on until the end of the century. "No, I've had enough," she replied.

John Lichfield

Jeanne Louise Calment: born Arles, France 21 February 1875; married 1896 Fernand Calment (died 1942; one daughter deceased); died Arles 4 August 1997.



... and in the 1890s

BIRTHS

COOLE-PANZA: On 1 August in California to Sara and John a daughter, Isabelle Melia. *Deo gratias.*

DEATHS

MURIE Alex Andrew, CBE QPM DL, on 1 August, aged 87. Former Chief Constable of Durham, husband of Helen de Parco (deceased). Family funeral. Memorial service will be arranged later.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, etc.) should be sent in writing to

Births, Marriages & Deaths

the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DA, telephone 0171-233 3011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-233 3012) or faxed to 0171-233 2010, and are charged at 25.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER: Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). Please include a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Professor Neil Armstrong, the first man on the Moon, 67; Dr Duane Arnold, Principal, St Chad's College, Durham, 44; Mr Billy Bingham, football manager, 66; Sir Michael Drury, Emeritus Professor of General Practice, Birmingham University 71; Miss Barbara Flynn, actress, 49; Miss Joan Hickson, actress, 91; Lord Findlip, chairman, Christie's International, 57; Mr Alan Howard, actor, 60; Field Marshal Sir Peter Lloyd, Constable of the Tower of London, 62; Mr Richard Jewson, former chairman, Meyer International, 53;

Sir Michael Kerry, former Procurator General, 74; Sir Bert Millichip, Life Vice-President, the Football Association, 83; Mr John Monks, general secretary, TUC, 52; Mr Turrough O'Donnell, former Lord of Appeal, Northern Ireland, 73; Mr Rodney Pattison, yachtsman, 54; Mr Keith Pearson, Headmaster, George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, 54; Sir Eric Fountaine, chairman, James Beattie, 64; The Hon Miriam Roth, edit, zoologist and entomologist, 89; Sir Nicholas Scott, former MP, 64; Lord Selson of Garston, former chairman, North West Economic Planning Council, 82; Mr Peter

Smith, chairman, Coopers and Lybrand, 51; Mr John Speller MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Defence, 50; Mr Jimmy Webb, songwriter, 51; Mr John Whitaker, showjumper, 42.

Anniversaries

Birth: Alexander William Kinglake, historian and traveller, 1809; Charles-Louis Ambroise Thomas, composer, 1811; Edward John Eyre, administrator and explorer of Australia, 1815; Henri-René Albert-Guy de Maupassant, author, 1850; Conrad Potter Aiken, novelist and poet,

1889; Harold Holt, Australian prime minister, 1908; Robert Taylor (Spangler Arlington Brugh), actor, 1911; Deaths: Louis III, King of France, 882; Thomas Newcomen, inventor and engineer, 1729; James Gibbs, architect, 1754; Lord Frederick North, second Earl of Guilford, statesman, 1792; Alexis-Benoit Soyer, master cook and writer, 1858; William Henry Giles Kingston, author of boys' books, 1880; Thomas Henry Wyatt, architect, 1880; Friedrich Engels, political writer, 1895; Philip William "Phil" May, caricaturist, 1903; George Butterworth, composer, 1916; Catherine "Skittles" Walters,

courtesan, 1920; Ella Shields (Buscher), music-hall artist and male impersonator, 1952; Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jean Mortenson), film actress, 1962; Richard Burton (Richard Walter Jenkins), actor, 1984. On this day: Sir William Wallace, leader of the Scots, was captured by the English, 1305; polygamy was abolished in Turkey, 1924; the British transatlantic airmail service was started, 1939; the musical *Salad Days* was first produced, London 1954; the European Monetary Agreement was signed, 1955. Today is the Feast Day of St Abel, Saints Addai and Mari, St Afra and St Nonna.

Lectures

National Gallery: Jacqueline Assoll, "Babies (1): Rubens's 'The Judgement of Paris'", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Anna Contadini, "The Art of Calligraphy in the Decorative Arts of the Islamic World", 2.30pm. British Museum: Barbara Brend, "Islamic Architecture in Cairo", 1.15pm.

Changing of the Guard

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery man the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, (near the Horse Guards, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, last provided by the Irish Guards.

High stakes in Korea, and rewards to match

The Hermit Kingdom is the convenient cliché for North Korea, the last remaining country in the world where undiluted Stalinism still reigns. It implies a distant, mysterious place that hides itself away from the world – and perhaps isn't of much consequence for the rest of the world. It may be a secret and secretive place, but the crumbling of this Cold War enclave is of enormous importance.

We know a little – a very little – about what is going on in North Korea. We know that there is famine, because successive harvests have failed. Two years of floods were followed by a year of drought. Doctrinaire mismanagement had already created an economic disaster; now there is a humanitarian catastrophe as well. People are starving to death, probably in large numbers. The only reason that this has not aroused more interest is that television cameras are not thick on the ground in North Korea. It is a reclusive, authoritarian state, and so the scale of the crisis is hard to judge. Western journalists are not, officially, allowed in, though they do sneak in from time to time.

We also know that, after the death of the long-time dictator Kim Il-Sung, there is political instability. The transition to Kim Jong-Il, his son, is slowly proceeding, but in the interim there are indications that all is not well. Instability has once more raised fears of conflict on the peninsula, as a dying regime lashes out. There are two million men under arms on either side of the demilitarised zone that divides North and South; it is a place where war has been an ever-present possibility for four decades.

The good news is that talks start today which could lead to a peace treaty that would at last end the enmity between the two Koreas, and replace the fragile ceasefire that has existed since 1953. The bad news is that we know very little about the intentions and capabilities of North Korea, a state more isolated than any other in the world.

We have more at stake in this than you might imagine. British soldiers fought and died for Korea 40 years ago; if there were to be another war there, then it is more likely that Britain would again offer troops. The reason is simple. South Korea, the capitalist and democratic part of the peninsula, is of critical importance for the West as a trading partner, investor, and strategic ally in the region. We have a lot tied up in Korea.

The fact that Korea is not understood, not known in Britain should be a source of regret. It is 200 years since the first contacts between Britain and the Koreans, and both sides are celebrating it this year through cultural events and exhibitions. These have

made little public impact, partly because people think of the Koreans as a rather strange and distant nation, very alien from our own culture. In fact, the Koreans are a rather jolly bunch, and it is a shame that more people do not know that. Perhaps most importantly, we do a lot of business with South Korea: British firms have recorded huge export growth there over the past few years, and businesses like Hyundai, Daewoo, Samsung and LG (Lucky Goldstar) have brought jobs and investment to every part of Britain.

Historically, it has been a reclusive

nation, afraid that outside influence would destroy it. It has had to learn, over the centuries, to survive, caught between China and Japan. Occupation by Japan was ended only by the war, which was immediately followed by the civil war that left it divided into warring camps. Rapid growth in the South has transformed it into one of the world's largest and richest economies; stagnation in the North has turned it into one of the world's worst basket cases. The resolution of this strange national dialectic could lead to war; it could, at last, heal the division of the peninsula.



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Conflict would threaten not just South Korea, but the fragile peace in East Asia. It would draw in America, China, Japan, and perhaps Russia as well. North Korea may be an economic disaster but it is well armed, and probably has access to at least one nuclear device as well as chemical and biological weapons.

But a lasting settlement in the Korean peninsula also has implications. It may well mean that South Korea draws yet closer to China, and perhaps further away from the US, which has had troops in the South since 1953. It could, eventually, lead to the re-emergence of a united Korea, something that would have implications for Asia similar to those of a united Germany for Europe – a redrawing of the Cold War map.

That is years away. What we can hope for, at the moment, is an easing of tensions, and some help for those in North Korea who have suffered under one of the world's harshest tyrannies. Right now, Britain's position ought to be very clear: we have a powerful self-interest, as well as a humanitarian interest, in ensuring that the Korean peninsula remains relatively stable, while moving towards a peaceful resolution of the half-century division that has so badly hurt the population of the North. We cannot and should not do this by force of arms, or indeed any force; but we can do it by showing that

we are willing and able to help the population of the North, and that its interest lies in opening up to that aid, both culturally and economically. Long task, you might say – but very high reward, if we get it right.

97 reasons to be cheerful

The Independent has long kept a certain distance in reporting the trivia of royal life, whether it be the shooting skill of the heir to the throne, or the morals of one or another of Her Majesty's children or children-in-law. All these are, in the end, passing fancies, which, though they are of enormous significance in the lives of the people involved, make little or no difference to you, or to us.

But it is hard to let pass without any comment at all the arrival of The Queen Mother at the fine age of 97. Living to such an age as a cheerfully fulfilled human being – nay, merely *compos mentis* – is a wonderful achievement, to be celebrated regardless of social status. Yesterday died, in France, the oldest person in the world, aged past 120. The rest of us can only look on in envy, and admire the attainment of such a long and rich life.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stress did not cause Gulf war illnesses

Sir: Gulf war illnesses, of which there are many, have not been blamed on "everything from flea collars to sheep dip", as Elaine Showalter asserts ("Gulf War Syndrome: all in the mind's eye", 2 August). The chemicals used in such products have, however, been implicated in some of the many illnesses reported by Gulf war service and civilian personnel.

Governments and their scientific advisors worldwide have often accidentally or deliberately suppressed information or misled victims and their families about occupational disease recognition, diagnosis and exposure facts. This has been particularly the case for occupational hazards faced by military personnel. The evidence we have already about the Gulf war indicates what can at best be described as past government "errors" about what chemicals military personnel used or were exposed to, whether they were monitored effectively and appropriately and for how long.

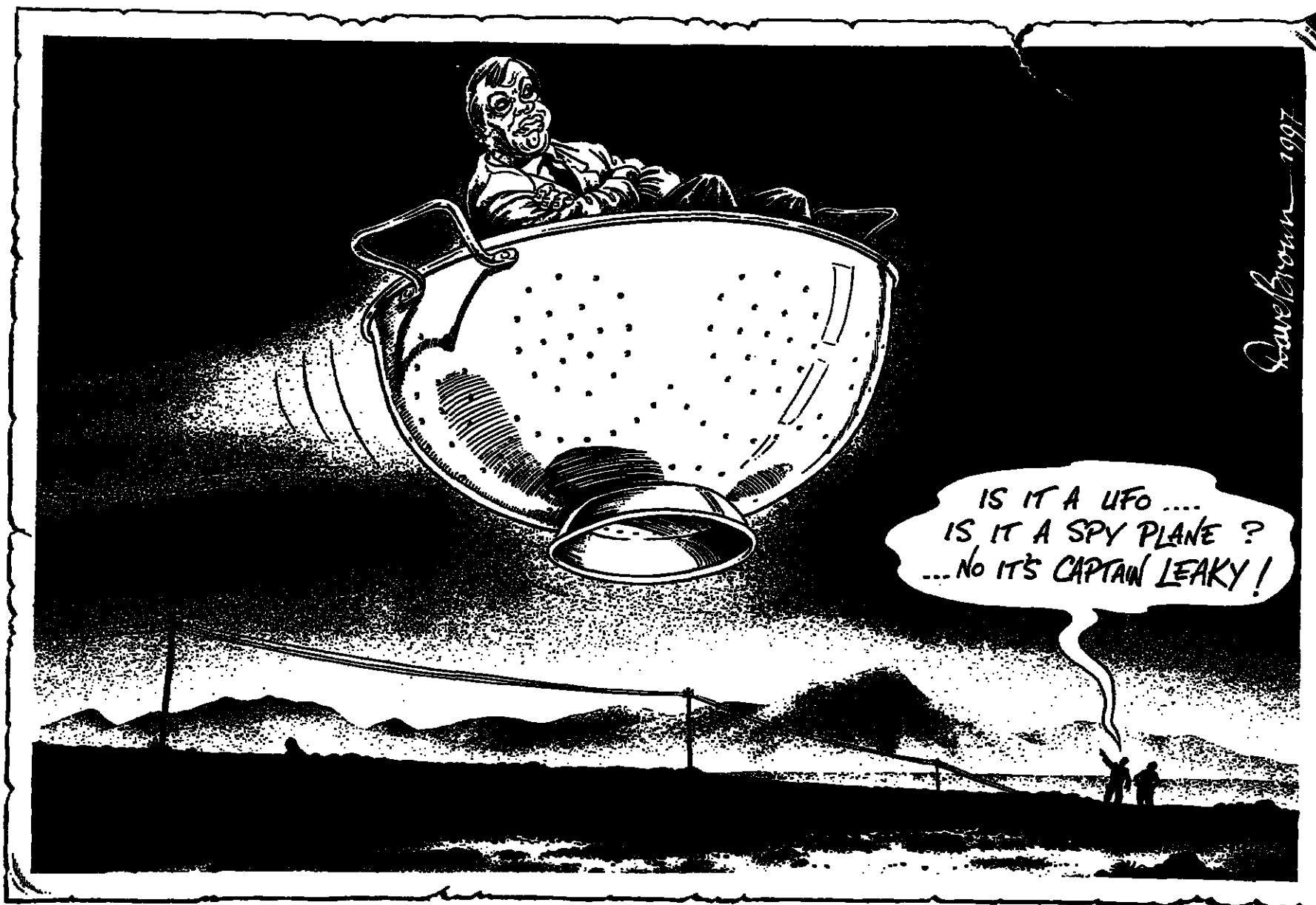
There is plenty of evidence showing that a range of organophosphates cause neurological damage. There is some evidence too that these OPs can cause both neuropsychological and neuropsychiatric damage, sometimes at low levels. There is good evidence that certain OPs may be more damaging if mixed together or with some prophylactic drugs than on their own.

In occupational health, one does not expect an official response to any report of illnesses due to chemical exposures has sometimes been that workers are "stressed" or hysterical and that the problem is psychological and not physical; hence the cases cannot be the fault of employers or governments who regulate such chemicals. It is strange to see this thesis now emerging as a catch-all explanation for many of the illnesses attributed to Gulf war veterans.

Some of the Gulf war veterans say well be experiencing such stress. To suggest that this explains the symptoms of all or most of the veterans ignores much evidence from occupational hygiene, toxicology, epidemiology. It may well, however, prove an easy and neat excuse for those governments wanting to avoid explaining what did happen in the Gulf and why many people serving there reported symptoms consistent with chemical poisonings.

A new system for police complaints

Sir: Your report that the Police Federation has written to the Home Secretary suggesting the introduction of an independent system to investigate police complaints ("Police call for new corruption body", 4 August) is very welcome. The federation has been saying for many years that if people are unhappy with the system of the police investigating police then it would not be opposed to change. Liberty has also been pressing for an independent system for many years and the increasing scepticism of members of the public suggests that now is the time to change it.



Whilst the Police Complaints Authority does provide an independent element, the actual investigation of complaints by police officers, often from the same force, can no longer claim widespread support. The increasing numbers of people who ignore the complaints system in favour of taking their cases through the civil courts is evidence of this dissatisfaction.

Civil actions against the police are preferred because the complainant is a real party to the process, legal aid is available to pay for representation by lawyers, the police are under a duty to disclose all the evidence and documents, and the issues are raised in a public trial where officers are asked to justify their decisions. What is also important is that in many cases the issues of fact and the awards of damages have to be resolved by juries. Of course civil actions increasingly often lead to payments of damages whereas complaints only lead to officers being disciplined.

Civil actions against the police do not of course provide an adequate remedy for those who are not poor enough to qualify for legal aid nor for those who were "only" subject to a minor assault or who were "only" unlawfully detained for a short period. Civil action is not therefore a substitute for a proper complaints system. Nevertheless any new system, apart from being independent, would have to ensure a full role for the complainant, proper disclosure and be open and transparent. We have a long way to go before the current complaints system meets these principles but the first steps need to be taken now.

JOHN WADHAM
Director, Liberty
London SE1

Tough action on animal cruelty

Sir: I fail to understand how postponing the revocation of Huntingdon Life Sciences' licence until November ("Huntingdon may lose its licence", 25 July) solves the problem of the large number of animals on site.

The cruelty which has been exposed at Huntingdon Life Sciences is not an isolated incident but, as has been proved time and time again by undercover investigations carried out by animal rights groups, is common to very many, if not all, animal testing laboratories. The spectacle of Huntingdon's more prestigious clients falling over themselves to dissociate themselves from this latest and very public disclosure is nauseous to say the least. Likewise that of the Home Office, whose behaviour prior to the exposure is yet more evidence against the validity of its inspection system.

To scold Huntingdon is not sufficient, even such public scolding as has been taking place. In order that we can begin to have faith in this government's proposed review of the Animals (SR) Act (at present little more than a vivisectionists' charter), Huntingdon Life Sciences' licence must be revoked immediately and permanently, all those implicated in the wrongdoings, including senior staff and Home Office officials, must be prosecuted and Dr David

Christopher, Huntingdon's research director, must be forced to resign from the Animal Procedures Committee.

ROSALIND FISHER
London SE15

The best measure of inflation

Sir: Your article "Inflation overstated" finding could ease rates pressure" (Business and City, 29 July) misrepresents our position.

The Boskin Report raised no new issues; it simply gave a select range of issues greater prominence. Statisticians worldwide, and at ONS, have been studying these and other complex problems associated with consumer price indices for many years. Our view, on past work, is that the RPI at present remains the most accurate single measure of consumer inflation in the UK. It is produced using the best available methodology following advice of an independent RPI advisory committee.

What we are confident about is that many of the issues raised in the Boskin Report for the US do not have the same force in the UK. Nevertheless, along with many other countries, we are undertaking additional research and analysis to investigate further the issues raised.

The RPI is extremely important and it is essential that our research work is shared with international colleagues and with

experts in this country so that we can assure ourselves that it is well based. The ONS paper referred to in your article was a discussion document containing preliminary views from one statistician on some aspects of the work programme.

When this work is complete and has been tested against parallel international research we will be in a better position to form a view about whether or not the RPI is biased. We would consult widely on such an important issue.

TIM HOLT
Director, Registrar General
and Head of the
Government Statistical Service
Office for National Statistics
London SW1

Exchanging old rituals for new

Sir: Given time, clergy devote much care and thought in constructing funeral services but the task becomes more difficult as numbers increase (Letters, 1 August). The more the numbers of requests for non-religious funerals multiply, the more difficult it will become for their conductors, too, to avoid falling back upon routines.

Clergy generally have a regular two or three funerals to conduct each week, round the year (just do the arithmetic). Remaining fresh under such a sustained demand and providing continuing support after the funeral (where

it is asked for) as the numbers accumulate, stretches personal resources. If demands upon them increase, non-religious conductors, too, will scarcely avoid a similar trial.

Clergy spend much time before a funeral sounding out what rituals mourners in all their variety have already in mind and are going to be relying on, so as to be able to supply them. The more common non-religious funerals should become, the more one would expect to see patterns of words and actions emerging – fresh, maybe, conceivably totally non-traditional – but these would, in effect, be new rituals. Indeed, anthologies of "non-ritualistic" ideas for funerals are already published (and very helpful some of them are) but what are these but new rituals in the process of formation?

The Rev MICHAEL ATKINSON
Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Commercial radio at the BBC

Sir: While Radio 3's as well as Radio 4's innovations are under the spotlight, may I ask why practically every item on the "On Air" programme nowadays has to be preceded or followed by a BBC commercial?

Commercial broadcasters of classical music (or of what passes for it these days) at least refrain from such continuous, blatant and, if one regular listener's reaction is anything to go by, ultimately self-defeating, self-advertisement.

WALTER GREY
London N3

Valuable role of Scottish Ballet

Sir: I would like to express my personal support for the Scottish Ballet and do most fervently hope it will be allowed to have a strong future in Scotland (Letters, 2 August).

When I joined the Music Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain (as it then was) in 1970, almost my first task as officer responsible for dance was to make flying visits to Scotland with my then Chair of Dance, Peter Williams, to assist in an investigation by the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) into the somewhat precarious future of Scottish Ballet, which at SAC's invitation had moved permanently to Scotland in 1969, but was encountering financial problems.

After some months of deliberations, we were delighted when SAC endorsed the company's future, recognising the value of the company's service, not only in major Scottish theatres but throughout the Highlands and Islands, together with an approach to outreach work which was almost unique in its day.

Throughout my service as Dance Director (1979-89) for ACGB this company was often held up as a good role model for its very special service to Scotland while at the same time having the talent to present the major "classics" at international standard feel certain it would be a real deprivation for dance lovers in Scotland if the company were allowed to close.

As a member of the board of Birmingham Royal Ballet I was very pleased indeed to know that our production of *La Fille Mal Gardée* has been offered on loan to Scottish Ballet for presentation this Christmas if the company is enabled to survive. Can the Scottish Arts Council now show similar generosity of spirit in its attitude to the current negotiations and find a positive solution to the crisis?

JANE NICHOLAS
London W6

Renewable energy for the Dome

Sir: I would have thought a better proposition than to clad the Millennium Dome with PVC (Letters, 4 August) would be to use a combination of aluminium and photo-voltaic cells. The former is fully recyclable and the latter fully reusable: important considerations for a structure which is likely to have a short lifetime.

The use of photo-voltaic cells in a substantial way would also enable the exhibition to have a display about renewable energy, which ought to be high on the list of priorities, given the rapidly growing importance of developing a sustainable society.

CHOSMAN
Aberdeen

British Museum: clear the car park

Sir: I am delighted that the eyesore of car parking is to be removed from the courtyard at Somerset House (report, 28 July).

Now, can we achieve the same at the British Museum? It is a disgrace that cars are allowed to clog the entrance and the space around this great building.

PHILIP STOTT
Gravesend, Kent

analysis

The battle not to be left behind

Despite a shared political heritage, Tony Blair's New Labour government is very different from Lionel Jospin's new Socialist one. John Lichfield asks which is most likely to deliver on its promises

President Chirac loves his little jokes, even in defeat. When Tony Blair went to the Elysée palace for lunch in June, the Gaullist President greeted him warmly and congratulated him on his first month in office. But he added: "You must go further, if you are going to keep up with us Socialists..."

It was a pleasant little joke, which worked on three levels. Mr Chirac was mocking himself, because his centre-right coalition had lost the parliamentary election two weeks before. Second, he was teasing Mr Blair, for having seamlessly and cheerily abandoned the use of the word socialist. Third, he was suggesting that the simultaneous success of the left in London and Paris, for the first time in half a century, might be an invitation to cross-channel competition, rather than brotherly understanding.

On that same day, the newly-installed Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, could find no time to see the visiting Labour Prime Minister. There was a flurry of speculation, in both the British and French press, that the two men had conceived an instant dislike for one another. The speculation (including some by the present writer) has since been dismissed by French and British officials as misplaced: Jospin and Blair, they say, get on perfectly well. Although no firm plans have yet been made, the two prime ministers hope to meet informally during their holidays this month, close to Mr Jospin's political base south of Toulouse.

What remains certain is that, whether they like it or not, whether they like each other or not, Jospin and Blair are rivals. They are rivals for the moral and actual leadership of the European centre-left; but also in a perverse way, they are domestic rivals.

If Jospin succeeds, with a more interventionist, more demand-oriented programme than New Labour, the success will be thrown in Blair's face by Labour dissidents and Guardian leaders. If Blair succeeds while preserving the market orthodoxies of the Eighties and Nineties, never

quite accepted in France, his success will be seized by the French right (is already being seized) as a cudgel with which to beat "Jospinisme".

In one sense, this is inevitable. The two men are trying to answer the same question: what are left-of-centre politics for in a post-socialist world? In another sense, comparison is unfair, or misleading: the two men are sitting examinations with different questions. Britain and France are neighbouring but dissimilar countries which are at different stages in their political and economic cycles.

After the achievements, but also the excesses of 18 years of dogmatic Conservatism, Tony Blair inherited something very rare in politics: a booming economy coupled with a popular thirst for change. Unemployment is low, growth irrepressible. So much so that his chief problem is to prevent heated domestic demand from boiling up into inflation. He has a gargantuan majority and no organised opposition.

Lionel Jospin inherits a series of botched semi-reforms, stretching back over six years and three governments. The domestic economy is faltering; domestic demand is falling; unemployment is still rising (up to 12.6 per cent in June). He has to co-habit with President Chirac, who can pick his opportunities to trip him up. He has a slender parliamentary majority, which includes Communists, Greens and radical socialists, who have very different ideas to his own (and to one another).

The first weeks in office – 100 days for Blair, 60 for Jospin – seem to have produced a clear victory for Blairism. The Prime Minister's popularity has increased; he has made few mistakes; the Government has remained disciplined and, publicly at least, united. Gordon Brown's Budget was a media and public relations triumph (even if the markets still have doubts).

Jospin, by contrast, got himself into a series of muddles over the European single currency, the Renault closure in Belgium and immigration. His ministers contradicted one another publicly. His popularity has declined (but not much).

Partly this can be explained functionally. Blair knew that he was going to win the election: he



had several years to prepare for office. Labour was careful to promise nothing it could not deliver. Jospin, like everyone else, thought that he was going to lose the election, which in any case came sooner than expected. The French Socialist programme was an attempt to limit the electoral damage: no one expected to have to implement it. Up to 700,000 jobs would be created through state spending, half in state jobs. Weekly working hours would be reduced from 39 to 35 with no loss of pay. There would be no austerity programme. No tax rises. France would still meet the budget criteria for joining Economic and Monetary

truth, growth, which is nothing of his making, may rescue Jospin.

Despite the rise in unemployment in June, the outlook for the French economy is now the best it has been in five years. The franc has sunk by 20 per cent against the dollar and the pound in eight months. Inflation remains scarcely perceptible. Interest rates are low. Exports, already booming for months, have now become fantastically good. According to a semi-official projection, the French economy should grow at an annual rate of 3 per cent in the second half of this year, the same as Britain's.

It may take a while for domestic demand to respond, and unemployment to fall. But any sustained increase in growth will ease Mr Jospin's task in squaring the circle of his election pledges over the next couple of years.

And here is the rub. A short-term recovery of growth would be welcome but it would do nothing to solve the longer-term ills of the French economy. It may allow Mr Jospin to muddle through his five years without achieving much. On the other hand, it could give him an opportunity to be as creative as Tony Blair, in some ways more creative.

6 The two men are both trying to say what left-of-centre politics are for in a post-socialist world 9

tary Union (Emu). Mr Jospin, like an escapist, throwing away the key to his chains, added a final promise: to keep all his promises.

But, two months into office, Jospin's record is far from disastrous or discreditable. The shilly-shallying over whether France would make the Emu guideline of 3 per cent of GNP budget deficit this year seemed like incompetence. Some of the confusion was damaging. But look at the overall effect. It has prepared market opinion to regard a near-miss as a triumph. The stop-gap budget proposals announced last month were a fudge, if you like, but also a brilliant exercise in playing for time. The one-off taxes on the largest and most profitable businesses are broader than Gordon Brown's windfall tax on privatised utilities but little different in principle. For the time being, Jospin, with a very poor hand, has simultaneously appeased the Germans (just), the markets, the Communists, and French public opinion.

Jospin is not as immediately likable as Blair. He may not (yet) have thought so deeply about the future of the left. But he should not be dismissed lightly. He may have the one quality vital to all successful politicians: luck. Jospin promised that his programme would rekindle growth; in

Unlike Mr Blair and President Clinton, Mr Jospin does not follow a Thatcher or a Reagan. The US and British state sectors have shrunk in the last 20 years; in France the state has grown. One in four French people who have a job work, in some way, for the government. This may not, in itself, be as important as the corporatist attitudes in France; the aversion to risk; the lack of productive investment. The export boom is starting but it depends mostly on traditional luxury goods, subsidised farm produce, weaponry and machinery from state-controlled, or state-influenced, industries. Exports are exports are exports. But France, unlike, say Italy, remains poor at creating the kind of small or medium hi-tech and service companies which are rich in new jobs; hence, in part, the stubbornly high levels of unemployment.

The philosophical underpinning to Blairism (but also to the successful social-democratic models in the Netherlands or Denmark) is that you must create wealth before you spend it. The creation of wealth is seen as a matter for individuals and businesses; the spending of wealth, a

matter for individuals but also, more than Thatcherism would accept, the state. Blairism, if it delivers its promises, believes in the private creation of wealth but public investment in health and education and training. It believes in public service, although not much in public ownership.


The relative clarity of this vision is possible because Thatcherism went before. France has not been through this revolution, a revolution of attitudes as much as structures. France – and not just the French left – is still persuaded that the state can create wealth or should be part of that process, hence the Socialists' promise to create more state employment and tinker with working hours. There are superficial similarities between Gordon Brown's welfare-to-work programme and Mr Jospin's new-jobs-for-youth. But the British programme is about training; the French programme about creating from thin air new state, or state-subsidised jobs.

In truth, Jospin and some of his ministers do sometimes think more like Blair and his team than the conventional wisdom allows. Jospin in his first speech to parliament made a distinction between public ownership and public service. It now seems inevitable that, partly for budgetary reasons, some degree of privatisation will continue, whatever his Communist junior partners in government might think. Jospin also gave notice that welfare for the middle classes may have to come to an end (aka the abolition of university grants in Britain). The quarter-completed reform of the public health service may be abandoned in favour of something much more radical, perhaps more private insurance for the relatively well-off. Again budgetary need could lead the way. At the same time, the older thinking persists. The plan to reduce working hours is dear to the Communists, and some Socialists, and will be pursued.

Mr Jospin, in other words, is constructing Jospinisme as he goes along. If he is lucky with the economy over the next couple of years, he could re-set his own examination paper and attempt a more ambitious reform. Will he? It is not to be excluded. But he does not have the political freedom of action of New Labour. The similarities between Jospin and Blair may be greater than commentators imagine. The greatest difference, however, is in the countries they have to govern, and that is a big difference.

Blair was careful to promise nothing he could not deliver. Jospin thought he was going to lose the election: he never expected to have to implement the French Socialist programme

Photograph: Reuters



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Offer also applies to spouses

A lesson in how not to pull on the dance floor

Different cultures must be respected, not least because they might actually have something to teach us. Writing from a New Labour perspective, it is clear to me that arranged marriages, for instance, are probably a far better idea than we romantic Westerners have been prepared to admit. Infatuation and sexual attraction wear off. What matters (as Tony has said) is the ability to provide a stable home for the children, and – let's face it – one's parents may well be better judges of long-term compatibility than one's callow self. They have been there.

But sometimes it is hard to look at other civilisations with the open mind and clear eye that true tolerance requires. And so it was yesterday with me and the Turkish wedding. The celebration in question took place over the weekend in a small town close to the Iraqi border, and ended in tragedy when a hand grenade exploded in the middle of the feast. As the incident was being investigated, however, it was discovered that this had not been – as was first

thought – an attack by Kurdish extremists, but was the consequence of a terrible accident. Apparently, a grenade worn by one of the men attending the wedding had gone off after the pin had been pulled out – probably snagged on the clothing of a passing dancer.

Try as one might, it is hard to recognise the utility in a custom involving the wearing of volatile explosives at crowded functions. When you hire a harmless tuxedo for a cousin's wedding, the most offence you will cause is down to your misjudged, violently coloured waistcoat, or that nasty-looking cummerbund. Down on the Iraqi border, however, as the donkey cart awaits, Kemal is giving a final polish to his grenades. Perhaps his wife even adjusts them slightly, getting her husband to do a quick – but careful – twirl. When they arrive at the feast he is the object of admiration. "What a fabulous outfit!" his relations all tell him. "And where did you get the grenades?"

"In town. They're live, you know," he proudly informs them. "Oh!" they reply, impressed, "and now you



David Aaronovitch

must come on to the crowded dance floor and do some very energetic folk numbers. But mind the pin." Kemal, whichever way you look at it and whatever allowances you make for cultural idiosyncrasy, is a cretin. Or, rather, was a cretin. And any so-called civilisation that allows someone like him to play hopscotch dressed in bombs is surely deficient. Perhaps other guests arrived festooned in land-mines, or with rockets in their belts. Which, naturally, brings me to the late William

Burroughs. Burroughs, you may recall, outlived the woman he called his wife by 46 years. He pulled off this impressive trick of differential longevity by shooting her in 1951. In a flat above a bar in Mexico City – during a party – the inebriated writer produced a gun (he loved guns in his life), informed those present that he was about to repeat his famous William Tell routine, put a glass on Mrs Burroughs's head and fired. The glass remained intact.

Burroughs, however, was not a cretin. He was a great writer. Edith Sitwell didn't like him, which proves it. If it was Kemal's stupidity and predisposition towards reckless violence that, predictably, killed the wedding guests, it was Burroughs's dangerous, rebellious and admirable spirit that – unfortunately – killed his missus. This same awkward relativism was also apparent in some of the reporting of this week's American Indigenous Games. The Games include successful sports like football (invented by the Tolmecs), volleyball (the Aztecs),

lacrosse (the Huron), and some less well-known ones such as war canoe racing (first one to the waterfall gets to kill the Jesuit). But there is also a rather unusual, silly and slightly laughable game involving lying face down on the ground, putting all one's weight on one's knuckles and toes, and, from this bizarre position, springing forward as far as you possibly can. Pretty daft, eh? No wonder that one never caught on. "Barry, look at those superbly developed knuckles. And there he goes! Oh, it must be close to 1ft 3, a world record!"

But wait a minute. If you think that sounds mad, then imagine yourself trying to explain to a Mayan or a Seminole, the rudiments of the triple jump ("well, first you hop on one leg as far as you can, then you do one of those little coltish springs that small kids do, and finally, you..."), or the pole vault ("take a 10ft pole, run, stick the pole in the ground, and use it to lever yourself over a high bar, falling to the ground on the other side"). Let alone synchronised swimming.

So the UK is past its best. Want to bet?

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British Gas triumphs in domestic trials

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Gas has emerged as the surprise winner from the trials of domestic competition, according to confidential industry research, which shows the company has unexpectedly kept hold of the bulk of its highest spending customers.

The survey, commissioned by the Electricity Association for rival suppliers and seen by *The Independent*, shows that new entrants into the market have been most successful in persuading lower-spending households to abandon British Gas, the opposite outcome to that predicted.

It provides grim reading for

independent gas companies, which are already grappling with non-existent profit margins, because the most recent trial involves one of the UK's most affluent regions. More than 300,000 homes have so far deserted British Gas in the latest trials, which involve 1.4 million homes in Avon and Dorset and Kent and Sussex.

In addition, a separate unpublished study into the first competition trial in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, also by the Electricity Association, revealed that more than a third of customers who switched from British Gas were overcharged, some massively so, in their last bill from the company.

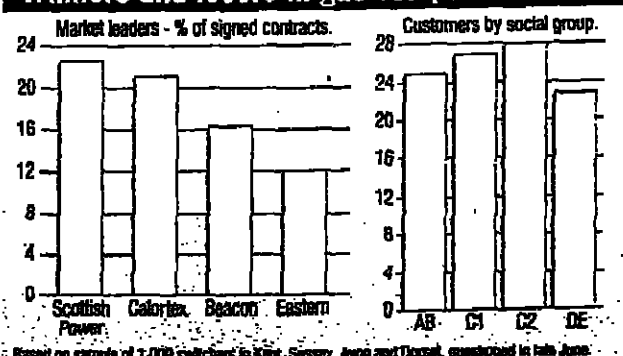
The most surprising finding

from the first survey, carried out in June, is that new suppliers have grabbed their biggest foothold in the "C2" social bracket, which make up 28 per cent of homes that have switched supplier.

In contrast, the wealthiest households in the professional and managerial "AB" segment, who generally have the biggest gas bills, have given the experiment a notably cooler reception, accounting for 25 per cent of those moving to rival companies. Such customers, which provide gas suppliers with their main source of profits, could expect to make much greater savings on annual bills of at least £500.

Even the lowest "DE" social category used by market re-

Winners and losers in gas competition trials:



searchers is responsible for some 23 per cent of homes which have left British Gas, attracted by savings of up to 25 per cent. More than half of the

switchers lived in three-bedroomed houses, while just 20 per cent owned four-bedroomed or larger properties. Privately, rival suppliers had

hoped to grab a much larger slice of big-spending homes from Centrica, the demerged British Gas supply business. Though they are obliged to sell to all social groups, it would be much harder to make profits without a substantial proportion of wealthier consumers.

One independent supplier said: "Centrica must be laughing at these figures. It may not be intentional but they've managed to off-load some of their least profitable customers on to us."

The survey is likely to lead to renewed concern that profits in the domestic energy business are too small to encourage potential competitors like the supermarket chains or oil giants to join in. Groups such as Sains-

bury's, Tesco and British Petroleum are all thought to have rejected selling gas, disappointing the industry regulator.

Of the four largest independent gas companies, Scottish Power has been the most successful in the latest trials, according to the Electricity Association, with more than 35 per cent of its customers in the AB category. ScottishPower's market share of more than 22 per cent is also the largest, closely followed by Calor, a joint venture between Calor and Texaco. But only 15 per cent of Calor's customers are in the AB group.

Eastern Natural Gas, owned by the regional electricity group, is some way behind in fourth place, with 12 per cent of the

market. Individual customers numbers have never been revealed by the regulator.

The second report, into customer satisfaction in the earliest competition trial, paints a bleak picture of widespread billing chaos, with 35 per cent of switchers claiming they were overcharged in their final British Gas bill. The research reveals that 15 per cent of consumers who switched supplier believed they were "massively" overcharged.

Some customers had hundreds of pounds accidentally debited from their bank accounts after British Gas miscalculated their final bills, a mistake blamed on faulty computer data. British Gas later apologised for the mess.

Pearson sets out plans to double value

Andrew Yates

Marjorie Scardino, the chief executive of Pearson, yesterday pledged to double the size of the media-to-entertainment conglomerate over the next five years by achieving double digit earnings growth every year.

She also hinted that Pearson, whose portfolio includes the *Financial Times*, Penguin books, *Madame Tussaud's* and the investment bank *Lazard's*, was likely to undergo a big restructuring in the near future, involving large acquisitions and disposals, to achieve this goal.

"We are not ruling anything out. There will be a different cast of businesses that there are now but our goal remains the same. We have taken 666p as our base [Friday's closing price] and we are shooting for 1332p," Ms Scardino said yesterday.

She revealed her ambitious plans as the group announced pre-tax profits of £81m (£30m) for the six months to June. But Pearson warned that if the strong pound could knock pre-tax profits by £20m in the current year.

Ms Scardino also denied press reports of a boardroom rift with Pearson TV chief Greg Dyke and indicated that the television businesses will be part of the company's long-term future.

"Just to knock this on the head, I'd like to say that Greg and I are not having open warfare. It's just not true. Pearson Television is one of our fastest growing businesses and we are excited about it. We are looking at how to give the TV businesses greater scale and Greg and I are doing it together," Ms Scardino said yesterday. She dismissed talk of a management buy-out of Pearson TV as "so much bunk".

Pearson confirmed plans to dispose of its medical publishing arm, which publishes prestigious titles such as *Gray's Anatomy*. Analysts believe the business, which has an annual

turnover of £40m, could fetch £60m-£80m.

Some analysts believe that Pearson will not be able to double its size without making substantial acquisitions and believe it can easily afford to spend more than £300m on purchases. Others believe that the group is looking to sell leisure attractions such as *Madame Tussaud's* and *Alton Towers* to raise extra cash for expansion. However, Ms Scardino refused to expand on which other businesses are likely to be bought and sold. She also refused to be drawn on the fate of *Lazard's*. Some City observers believe it sits awkwardly with the rest of the group's businesses, but Ms Scardino said *Lazard's* produced "great profits and cashflow and involved little capital".

Pearson insisted that Channel 5, in which it owns a 24 per cent stake, is on track despite technical hitches which caused reception problems. The company claims that Channel 5, which began broadcasting this spring, has picked up new viewers in July and now attracts more than 3 per cent of the viewing population.

Pearson will have to pay more than £70m in start-up costs for the Channel over the next few years. However, it plans to produce programmes for the new channel, which will bring in around £25m this year.

Pearson revealed that a fraud by one of its employees at the US division of its book publisher Penguin has already cost the group £48m. The employee was offering unauthorised discounts for the early payment of accounts. The employee has been fired and discounts withdrawn, with a resulting shortfall in receipts. Overall the group believes the fraud will cost £100m.

In an effort to make more staff shareholders Ms Scardino also announced plans to introduce share option packages and a new scheme to allow employees around the world to buy shares. Investment column, page 17



John Bond, chief executive of HSBC (second right) gets up after announcing another surge in earnings. Photograph: AFP

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

HSBC scorns speculation on bid for bank

The chairman of HSBC, Sir William Purves, poured cold water yesterday on persistent speculation that Britain's biggest financial group is poised to bid for another British bank. He said paying a premium to current market values in the high-flying sector would not be in the interests of HSBC's shareholders.

Speaking as the group announced much better than expected interim figures for the six months to June, Sir William added: "We don't have a shopping list. We're not active in this field, we've done quite a lot this year and we'll see that consolidate before we get excited about other things."

HSBC's first-half profits of £2.62bn, up 13 per cent, were well above analysts' expectations of around £2.4bn. After a higher than forecast 33 per cent rise in

the interim dividend, to 20p a share, the group's shares soared in early trading, touching a record high of £23.15 before closing at £22.38, up 44.5p.

Even by the standards of the banking sector, HSBC's shares have been extraordinary performers over the past five years since the group acquired Midland Bank in a bid to diversify from its traditional Hong Kong base. Since the beginning of 1993, they have risen more than seven-fold.

Acquisitions by HSBC in the past year have focused on expanding its interests in Latin America, where it sees strong growth potential. According to Sir William, there is no shortage of opportunities for HSBC to buy businesses and the group will only consider returning excess cash to shareholders when those opportunities dry up.

Sir William said the handover of Hong Kong, where HSBC makes around half its profits, to China had gone smoothly. The

group owns Hongkong Bank in the former colony and also a controlling stake in Hang Seng Bank. He said Hongkong Bank's results had been hit by a £40m underwriting loss, but declined to give any further details.

The loss pegged profits from Hongkong Bank back to £815m (£818m), while Hang Seng Bank's profits grew 7 per cent to £394m (£368m).

HSBC reported growth in loans especially in Hong Kong, where the property market was buoyant, and in the UK where corporate and mortgage lending was up.

He said that margins were under pressure at Midland Bank although the bank had managed a sharp fall in the cost income ratio to 56 per cent, well down on the 70 per cent ratio when it was taken over. Midland increased profits by 17 per cent to £512m.

Comment, page 15

BA shares fall as strike costs climb to £125m

Michael Harrison

The British Airways cabin crew strike last month cost the airline £125m, wiping out more than half the savings it expects to achieve this year from its £1bn business efficiency programme, it emerged yesterday.

BA also warned the strong pound could knock a further £200m off profits. Alongside a 28 per cent drop in operating profits for the first quarter, the news sent BA shares skidding down 30p to 610p, making them the worst performer in the FTSE 100 index.

The costs of the three-day stoppage in July are far higher than expected. Analysts had pencilled in losses of £40m-£100m. But BA said it was still feeling the effects of the dispute. Although no further stoppages are planned and unions and management have resumed talks on how to achieve the £42m cost savings BA is seeking, sickness levels among the 12,000 cabin crew staff are still 50 per cent above normal levels. About 900 staff are off sick - 350 more than BA would expect at this time of year.

BA's chief executive, Bob Ayling, who was heavily criticised for the airline's tactics during the strike, would not comment on the progress in the talks but said he was optimistic that the difficulties between the two sides could be resolved. "We can ill-afford a costly dispute of this sort. I very much hope we can win the hearts and minds of employees and customers of the need for efficiency changes which are essential for the future," he added.

BA expects benefits from the programme to exceed £200m this year and reach £1bn by the end of the decade.

Operating profits in the period from April to June were £140m compared with £195m last year. BA said that the overall impact of the strong pound had been to cut profits by £77m in the three months.

At the pre-tax level, profits were up by 47 per cent to £220m due to the one-off

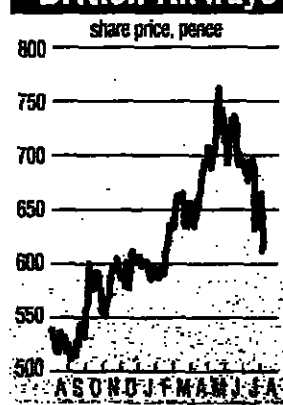
£130m gain from the sale of BA's stake in US Airways, its former transatlantic partner.

The strength of sterling contributed to a 6.3 per cent fall in operating margins and a 2.4 per cent decline in passenger yields - the amount earned per kilometre flown.

Mr Ayling said that excluding the impact of the strong pound and the £15m of strike-related costs during the quarter, the underlying growth in profits was 21 per cent. However, he added: "These figures show that we were right to put in place the restructuring plan. The airline industry remains very competitive."

The plan is to remove some 5,000 staff from the payroll through the sale and outsourcing of some businesses but to

British Airways



recruit an equal number in areas such as customer service. Compared with a year ago BA is employing 2,300 more people, leading to a 3.8 per cent increase in employee costs to £272m. But productivity improved 6.2 per cent in the quarter.

Sir Colin Marshall, chairman, said BA still hoped to receive regulatory approval from London, Brussels and Washington for the alliance with American Airlines. It has in effect set a deadline of this November for clearance. Even if the tie-up is approved by then, it is not expected to be able to launch the alliance until next summer.

Comment, page 15

Dial-a-Cab may take fresh route to drive for AIM

John Wilcock

Central London's largest black taxi firm, Dial-a-Cab, announced yesterday that it is considering ditching its friendly society status in favour of becoming a plc and floating on the Alternative Investment Market. The conversion and float would mean free "windfall" shares worth a minimum of £3,500 for all 1,638 member

drivers, according to Dial-a-Cab's chairman, Brian Rice.

Mr Rice said the recent spate of building society conversions to plc status had "helped to focus our minds". He said the main reason for the change would be to release value built up by drivers who had spent years working for Dial-a-Cab.

"We have approached the City advisers English Trust with

our conversion proposals and they have told us that each member would get at least £3,500 and possibly substantially more," Mr Rice said. English Trust is a firm of corporate advisers based in Charterhouse Square, London.

Dial-a-Cab was founded in 1953 as a friendly industrial provident society, or a co-operative. Mr Rice said that all members have to buy one share

in the society for £50 when they join, and then they sell the share back to the Society for just £50 when they leave, however long they have worked for the operation.

"We have always been looking at ways to release value in the society for our members. It seems to be a bit of an anomaly to get £50 back, however much profit you have built up," Mr Rice said.

The chairman wants to put the proposals to the society's next annual general meeting in November.

"I think in the main the vast majority of members would be in favour [of conversion]," he said.

"Giving people shares in Dial-a-Cab would also be a good way to incentivise the members."

Earlier this year the other big

London black-taxi firm, Computer Cab, proposed to float on AIM, but instead ended up selling an 80 per cent stake to overseas investors in Singapore and Australia.

Dial-a-Cab made net profits of £613,000 for the year ended 31 August 1996, and is expected to make around £800,000 for 1996/97.

"We're reasonably in the black," Mr Rice added.

Shire deal lifts biotech sector

Magnus Grimond

A £186m (£114m) deal to buy a US drugs group unveiled by Shire Pharmaceuticals and good results from Oxford Molecular helped the biotechnology sector shrug off negative sentiment yesterday.

Shire saw its shares end 8p higher at 249.5p after revealing the purchase of Richmond Pharmaceutical of Kentucky, a competitor to Medeva in the market for drugs to control unruly children. Oxford Molecular's shares rose 3.5p to 248.5p after announcing losses cut by 27 per cent to £677,000 along with a move to pay £2m for an option to take control of Cambridge Combinatorial, the company run by Alan Marchington, younger brother of Oxford's chief executive, Tony Marchington.

But the sector was dragged lower early on by British Biotech, the UK's biggest biotech company, which was hit by press reports suggesting potential anti-cancer blockbuster, faced problems both from current medical trials and the growing likelihood of competition from rivals such as Roche.

the Swiss giant. The claims, denied by the company, sent the shares 10p lower at one stage yesterday, before bouncing back to end 5p higher at 157.5p.

The Shire deal was greeted more enthusiastically by analysts. Richmond claims to have launched the fastest growing drug in the US to treat disruptive children with so-called attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In the space of 15 months, Adderall has swept up 5.1 per cent of a market put at \$457m in 1996. The company claims that with its other treatment, DextroStar, it has taken its overall share to 9 per cent recently, mostly at the expense of Abbott Laboratories' Cylert product and Medeva's methylphenidate, the generic drug which has fuelled recent growth.

Richmond says the product is longer lasting and has fewer side-effects. However, none of its drugs has patent protection and the group is facing a class action suit relating to its Phen-termine obesity treatment. The US Drug Enforcement Agency must also still approve Shire as a licence holder for strictly controlled drugs sold by Richmond. Investment column, page 17

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Change	YTD %
FTSE 100	4899.30	+47.8	+1.0	4964.20	4056.80	5344	3344	+2000	+59.8
FTSE 250	4488.40	+13.7	+0.3	4728.40	4386.20	5344	3344	+1000	+22.9
FTSE 350	2348.50	+20.9	+0.9	2373.70	2017.90	3400	1800	+1600	+44.4
FTSE SmallCap	2188.73	+2.9	+0.1	2374.20	2178.29	3200	1800	+1400	+61.1
FTSE All-Share	2291.97	+18.4	+0.8	2316.03	1989.78	3300	1900	+1400	+40.0
FTSE 100-Share	8194.04	+80.6	+1.0	8254.89	5032.94	11000	4000	+7000	+75.0
New York	19604.38	-585.2	-2.9	20681.07	17303.85	24000	12000	+12000	+50.0
Tokyo	16379.22	+721.1	+4.6	16379.22	12055.17	20000	8000	+12000	+150.0
Hong Kong	16379.22	+721.1	+4.6	16379.22	12055.17	20000	8000	+12000	+150.0
Frankfurt	4408.79	+91.1	+2.1	4438.93	2848.77	5000	2000	+3000	+75.0

Statistics as of 4 August

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.97	7.5	7.02	7.06	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05
US	5.56	5.91	6.16	6.60	6.42	6.42	6.42	6.42	6.42
Japan	0.5	0.80	2.11	3.33	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3.09	3.47	5.61	6.34	6.30	-	-	-	-
BOND YIELDS									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.97	7.5	7.02	7.06	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05
US	5.56	5.91	6.16	6.60	6.42	6.42	6.42	6.42	6.42
Japan	0.5	0.80	2.11	3.33	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3.09	3.47	5.61	6.34	6.30	-	-	-	-
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
Shire	219.5	25	12.9	British Biotech	162.5	21	12.1	-	-
MSIS	1580	175	12.5	Halsbury	158	14.5	8.4	-	-
Lloyds TSB	738	76.5	11.6	National Power	542	48	8.1	-	-

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	Close	Week's chg	YTD chg	YTD %	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD %
\$ (London)	1.6370	-2.81c	1.5572	-0.6109	+1.03	0.6422	-	-	-
\$ (New York)	1.6315	-3.25c	1.5525	-0.6129	+1.19	0.6423	-	-	-
DM (London)	3.0984	-1.97p	2.2946	1.8567	+1.85p	1.4738	-	-	-
¥ (London)	193.256	+1.178	186.234	¥ (London)	118.055	+1.285	106.755	-	-
€ Index	106.3	-0.9	84.7	\$ Index	100.0	0.0	95.6	-	-
OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Close	Week's chg	YTD chg	YTD %	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD %
Oil Brent	19.06	-0.06	19.40	RPI	157.5	+2.9p	153.0	12 Aug	-
Gold	324.05	-1.2	389.50	GDP	112.8	+3.4p	109.1	21 Aug	-
Gold \$	197.85	-0.73	248.20	Base Rates	6.75p	-	5.75	-	-



Sir William should consider catching this wave

COMMENT

The ticklish question for the HSBC chairman is whether he can really afford to stand by and watch Midland become marginalised as the UK banking sector consolidates

First Sainsbury's caught the bug, now Richard Branson says he wants to be a banker. It is no wonder that HSBC's chairman, Sir William Purves, is so sniffling about buying another British bank - with so many returns from the sector are plainly unsustainable.

From his perspective at the head of one of the few truly global commercial banks, the risks of missing out on the wave of consolidation in our mature, oversupplied and expensive banking industry must seem pretty insignificant. To understand why he is right to tread warily over here, consider the following. Start with an economy worth £100bn, grow it at 2 per cent a year for 10 years and you end up with just £122bn. Grow that same £100bn at 7 per cent a year and you end up with more than doubling it to £197bn over the same period.

The enormous power of compounding explains why HSBC's strong position in countries like China, Malaysia and India, where GDP is growing at between 5 and 10 per cent a year, is worth so much more in the long run than stakes in the economies of the US, UK and western Europe, where growth is a mere pedestrian 2 to 4 per cent.

With wealth per head of population reckoned to be no more than about \$720 in China, compared to \$29,600 in the US, there is no reason to suppose recent levels of growth should not continue for years if not decades. If current rates continue, China will

have the biggest economy in the world by the year 2020, meaning it is unlikely to be rocking the boat in Hong Kong.

The picture is actually brighter than these bald figures might suggest. In Latin America, where HSBC has acquired a leading position in the past year for about a third as much as it would have to pay for a second-line such as Alliance & Leicester, the proportion of the population deemed to be even bankable is as low as 20 per cent. There is enormous scope for growth.

Accept that the bankable population in developing markets will grow faster than the economy as a whole, and throw in the propensity in a lot of Far Eastern markets for high levels of personal saving, and the outlook for HSBC begins to justify the seven-fold increase in its share price over the past five years. That, at any rate, is the theory.

The ticklish question for Sir William is whether he can really afford to stand by and watch Midland become marginalised as the UK banking sector consolidates. Faced with the creation of another Lloyds TSB retail banking giant, HSBC's strategy could take a sharp temporary diversion.

Economic council is a verbal trick

As a finishing touch to all the dramatic changes he has made to the running of economic policy, Gordon Brown has named

the first two members of his Council of Economic Advisers. But the two experts, both highly respected in their fields, will not be working together, as the title "Council" suggests. Rather, they will advise different teams of Treasury officials on their separate areas of expertise.

Fair enough. The Treasury has for a long time very sensibly drawn on outside talent in this way. But it means that this is a Council in name only, a verbal gimmick that will allow the Chancellor to live up to a high-faluting pre-election pledge.

The similarities with the US Council of Economic Advisers begin and end with the name. For the US version advises the President rather than his Treasury Secretary. It is an independent focus of economic advice, semi-detached from government.

It is usually composed of very high-profile and independent-minded economists who can speak their own mind if they disagree with aspects of policy. They might not last in the job if they were too outspoken too often, but equally they are not lightly sacked.

The American CEA actually bears a closer resemblance to the Treasury's ill-fated panel of "wise persons", in that it publishes every year an annual report on the state of the economy and its future prospects. This report is taken as an authoritative assessment. However, it has a status the Treasury panel's reports never achieved because they were deliberately selected to disagree with

each other - or represent a wide range of views, as the official gloss put it.

Like the panel it replaces, our own new Council of Economic Advisers is clearly not meant to provide a heavyweight, cohesive commentary on the Government's economic policy in the same way as its US namesake. It is hard to resist the suspicion that, in fact, the last thing Mr Brown wants is any possibility of disagreement with his policies, especially from anybody with the status that an established reputation brings.

So all praise to the Chancellor for bringing in advisers to top up the Treasury's own extensive expertise. But he should not expect anybody to fall for the gimmickry of a fancy-sounding but empty title.

BA needs to boost its efficiency programme

British Airways management has spent a good deal of time circling around in the hope of burning off staff opposition to its business efficiency programme but sooner or later it had to crash land. The £125m bill BA has picked up following last month's three-day stoppage by cabin crew demonstrates that it is not just the airline's employees who are in for a bumpy ride if BA is to achieve its target of saving £1bn by the end of the decade.

It is extraordinary how quickly the costs can mount up when staff vote with their feet

- or rather their sick notes - and passengers decide to check in elsewhere. The strike costs are significantly above analysts' expectations. Together with a warning that the strong pound could leave a further £200m dent in profits this year, it was enough to send the shares spiralling down another 30p, making for a near 20 per cent retreat since its full-year results back in May.

Admittedly, BA has been buffeted by more than just poor employee relations. The continuing failure to receive regulatory approval for the alliance with American Airlines and the damage caused by the strength of sterling are at least as bad for sentiment.

But if BA is to repeat the success it achieved in the first decade after privatisation, then the business efficiency programme will be the key. One-off costs of £125m are small beer in comparison to potential benefits of £1bn.

The difficulty for BA is that as soon as it finds ways of saving money, new opportunities to spend it pop up. Although the efficiency programme is now two years old, the staff bill is rising, not falling or remaining static.

Launching a low-cost airline is not really the answer. BA has effectively been carrying out just such a policy by franchising out the name, livery and flight code to other airlines. Yesterday, but for the skill of a pilot, the dangers inherent in that strategy could have come home to roost too.

Brown names economic advisers to the Treasury

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Gordon Brown yesterday announced the appointment of two experts to his long-promised "Council of Economic Advisers" at the Treasury.

Paul Gregg, an economist from the London School of Economics specialising in the jobs market and inequality, and Chris Wales, a tax partner from Arthur Andersen, will work with teams of Treasury officials.

Although the new Council is billed as a replacement to the disbanded Panel of Independent Experts, the experts will focus on separate areas of policy rather than offering advice as a group. Yesterday's announcement made it clear that the individual policy experts would work alongside separate Treasury teams on the Government's priority areas.

Ed Balls, the special adviser

to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will continue to play a dominant role in economic policy. He has not formally been named chairman of the new Council but will co-ordinate policy as the Chancellor's main adviser.

Further outside appointments to the Council will be announced. Eventually there could be up to six experts brought in. In addition, the Treasury has not yet indicated whether or when Sir Alan Budd, its outgoing chief economic adviser, will be replaced. He is due to retire from the Treasury and move full-time to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee in November.

Names in the frame for the top economics job in the Treasury have included Gavin Davies, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, and Professor Charles Bean of the London School of Economics, as well as Mr Balls. However, the ultimate

structure of advice remains unclear. The Treasury dismissed recent reports that Permanent Secretary Sir Terry Burns will be replaced as "extremely speculative".

Paul Gregg will work part-time at the Treasury and part-time in his current position as Senior Research Associate at the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance. He will focus on the Government's welfare-to-work programme and the review of the tax and benefit system being co-ordinated by Barclays Bank chief executive Martin Taylor.

Mr Gregg is a specialist on job insecurity, poverty and movements into and out of unemployment. He co-authored research which established the fact, often quoted by the Chancellor, that one in five non-pensioner households in the UK does not have anybody in work.

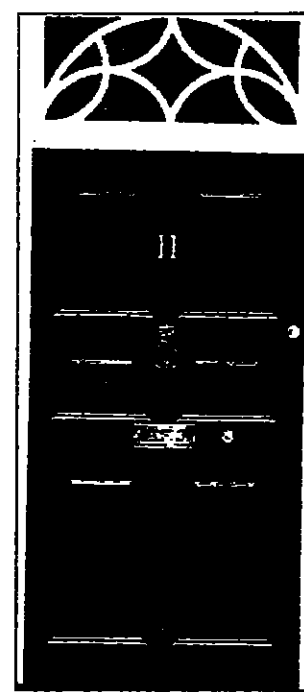
Chris Wales is a tax expert

who worked in Sweden from 1991 to 1995 as head of Arthur Andersen's international tax practice there. He has specialised in corporate tax issues, including the financing of takeovers, and is expected to concentrate on the Government's planned reform of company taxation. His clients have included big US and European multinationals.

The new Council of Economic Advisers has been billed as a parallel to the US body of the same name, but so far the similarity is confined to the name. The Treasury has for some years drawn on advice from outside economists, often part-time, on their particular areas of expertise.

Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, appointed Edward Troup, who has since moved to City law firm Simmons & Simmons as an adviser on taxation.

The Treasury's announced



The new Council is to advise Number 11 on policy design

Halifax data met with caution

Diane Coyle

The first tentative signs yesterday that consumer spending was not after all getting out of control were not expected to carry much weight with the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee when it meets this week.

Analysts remained divided about whether or not the Bank will announce the fourth increase in the cost of borrowing in four months after its meeting ends on Thursday.

Halifax reported yesterday that house prices had remained almost flat last month, climbing only 0.1 per cent. The annual rate of increase slowed to 6.4 from 7.1 per cent in June.

Halifax said that the housing recovery would continue, describing the market as "well supported". But its downturn figures contrasted with Nationwide's alternative measure. On Friday Nationwide said its house price index had jumped 1.8 per cent in July, with the annual rate picking up to 12.2 per cent.

A spokeswoman for Halifax claimed its rival's figures reflected a bias towards London and the South-east. But Nationwide said its figures were weighted to adjust for regional differences and were also more reliable because based on a bigger number of housing transactions than the Halifax measure.

With mixed signals on the housing market, a separate indicator yesterday pointed to slower growth in cash in circulation last month. The growth in the narrow money measure M0, of which cash forms the biggest component, eased to 5.9 from 6.2 per cent in June.

This was its slowest annual growth rate for 18 months. But economists were wary about drawing any conclusions for high street spending, as retail sales growth has picked up during this year even as narrow money growth has slowed.

Adam Cole, UK economist at James Capel, said consumers were spending on big ticket items which were unlikely to be paid for in cash. Analysts also pointed out that all other recent indicators of consumer spending had indicated booming demand. Yesterday's figures were not enough to change the minds of the Bank's experts if they wanted to raise interest rates.

IN BRIEF

German industrial output climbs

Industrial output in Germany bounced by 1.4 per cent in June, reversing a sharp fall in May. The Economics Ministry said there would be a "noticeable" upward revision to the latest figures in a few weeks' time. Economists said the figures indicated that recovery in Germany was on track, if not exactly robust, despite lacklustre domestic demand. Exports are driving the gains in output. According to the breakdown of the figures, construction output expanded by 6 per cent in June after a 4.9 per cent fall in May, while manufacturing output rose 1.2 per cent following a 1.3 per cent decline in May.

Shift in semiconductor market

Foreign companies secured a record 32.6 per cent share of Japan's semiconductor market during the first quarter of the year, according to US government figures. The previous record of 29.6 per cent was set in the fourth quarter of 1995. "This is evidence that market forces are at work," said US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. A year ago the US and Japan reached a new agreement on semiconductors aimed at ensuring continued progress on market access and industry co-operation.

Birmingham buys mortgage portfolio

Birmingham Midshires Building Society, which has been widely rumoured to be in takeover talks with Royal Bank of Scotland, has bought £460m worth of commercial mortgage loans from UCB, part of the French-based Compagnie Bancaire. The price paid for the portfolio, which is valued on a multiple of the difference between the interest on the loans and the cost of financing and administering the portfolio, has not been disclosed, but is thought to be approximately £50m. The portfolio consists of just 1,300 loans, ranging from takeaways restaurants to nursing homes, with an average value of £350,000 each, and will double the society's commercial lending book to £920m. Over the past five years Birmingham Midshires has bought 18 mortgage portfolios with a total value of almost £4bn, including £1.3bn worth of loans bought from HYPO-MSL. It will now have a total loan book of £7.6bn, about 85 per cent of it residential mortgages.

Sedgwick links up with Nikols Brichetto

Sedgwick Group is establishing a joint venture which will merge some of its risk services, insurance and reinsurance broking and employee benefits consulting operations with those of Nikols Brichetto Group. The venture, which will be completed before the end of the year, will operate initially from offices in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia. Nikols will own 51 per cent of the venture and a representative of the Moratti family, which owns Securifin, will be represented on the board of Sedgwick. Financial details were not disclosed.

Zeneca's schizophrenia drug approved

Zeneca Group has received formal approval from the UK Medicines Control Agency to market Serquel, its new antipsychotic for the treatment of schizophrenia. The approval follows last week's notification from the US Food and Drug Administration of the "approvable" status of Serquel for the American market. Serquel is Zeneca's first entry into the antipsychotic market and continues its expansion into the treatment of central nervous system (CNS) disorders. Zeneca's product range in the CNS therapeutic area includes treatments for migraine, epilepsy, anxiety and depression as well as anaesthetics. In 1996, sales in this area amounted to 16 per cent of Zeneca's total world-wide sales in pharmaceuticals of £2.435bn.

Newport launches hostile bid for Delyn

Newport Holdings launched a hostile, all-share £9.6m takeover bid for the rival Delyn property investment group. The basis of the bid is four new Newport ordinary shares for every three Delyn shares, valuing each of the target's shares at 110p. Delyn's shares climbed 17p to 98.5p. Newport said it believed the acquisition of Delyn would provide a strong platform from which to expand the enlarged group and would provide shareholders with an opportunity to invest in a soundly managed company with a proven record of investment in quality commercial properties let on strong tenant covenants.

The architect of New Labour's economics

Diane Coyle reports on the career of Ed Balls, the most influential adviser on the Chancellor's team

losophy, Politics and Economics at Keele College, Oxford. He then went on to win a Kennedy Scholarship to study for two years at Harvard University.

Harvard has a strong claim to be the world's most elitist academy, as well as one of its best. And one of the priciest too - its fees are up to \$30,000 (£18,000) a year. Despite the cost, though, it does not quite achieve the same social ex-

clusiveness as Oxford. But it caps even Oxbridge for intellectual arrogance. The assumption that Harvard students are superior is added to the food in the canteens, delivered with the lectures and proven in the job market.

Students are lectured by people who have reached the top of their professional tree, and the best - like Ed Balls - can work closely with academic superstars. In his case it was Lawrence Summers, a 42-year-old economist who is now a senior Clinton administration official.

Academics hold Mr Balls in very high regard, and his intellectual credi-

bility has helped the Chancellor. But some see a catch with the new approach in its vulnerability to fashion, to any new twist that seems to make economic theory fit the latest data better.

One of Larry Summers's senior Harvard colleagues finds the whole approach gimmicky. He says: "You can be too clever by half with this method."

It is a view that is shared by some

'Academics hold Ed Balls in very high regard, and his intellectual credibility has helped the Chancellor'

commentators in this country. Giving his assessment of the Government's first 100 days, Simon Briscoe, head of research at investment bank Nikko Europe, says: "There has been a focus on good PR at the expense of well thought-out policies."

He finds Labour's economics long on rhetoric and short on action, adding: "We must hope that the Government does not fall for its own rhetoric."

One casualty of the Treasury team's emphasis on the presentation of policies, in which Mr Balls is helped by Gordon Brown's spin-doctor, Charlie Whelan, is civil servant Jill Rutter, the former head

of the press office. Although clearly one head of press is enough, her sudden departure has not helped allay suspicions that rhetoric will continue to play too great a part in economic policy. Another frequent criticism is that Mr Balls lacks the long sweep of experience. Of course, this might just be the sour grapes of older and less successful economists.

But one thing that does put people off is his intellectual certainty. Until they feel the lash of his intellect, impatient with their slowness, people tend to like him. He has the politician's talent for flirtation and charm when he tries - with, by all accounts, the predictable effect on many of his female colleagues.

He swiftly learnt everyday political skills in Mr Brown's office, but the first thing everybody says about this Young Turk of the world of economic policy is that he is a good footballer. In the world of New Labour a lot is made of soccer affiliations. Ed supports Norwich and Arsenal.

More significantly, he plays in the amateur Thames League - for the Financial Times team. He did not sign for Labour's Red Menace team. Old Labourites read a lot into that. One of the Labour team's players draws the conclusion: "Gordon Brown has a tradition of taking activists and deactivating them."

Mr Balls is a long-standing and committed Labour party member. But it is the fact that he is New Labour through and through that cements his importance in the Treasury.

trials

shares fall
strike costs
b to £125m

British Airways

deal lifts
tech sector

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market report / shares

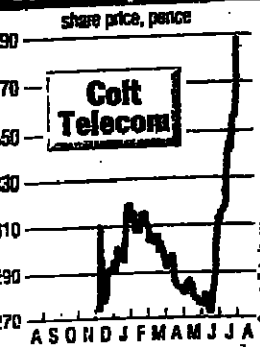
Holiday market wakes up for HSBC and Pearson

Taking Stock

Data Bank

FTSE 100	4895.7	-3.6
FTSE 250	4485.0	-3.4
FTSE 350	2346.8	-1.7
SEAQ VOLUME	599.3m shares,	
	48,026 bargains	
Gilts Index	97.01	-0.25

Share spotlight



It seemed that market-makers had finally packed their bags for the summer yesterday, after a quiet day's trading which was only enlivened by two sets of dazzling corporate interim results.

Just 600 million shares changed hands across the market and Footsie failed to hold ground the other side of the 4,900 mark that it reached in early trading. It closed 3.6 points down at 4895.7, having touched 4,907.2 at one stage.

Pearson and HSBC Holdings stole most of the limelight, as both impressed with better-than-expected interim profits. Pearson climbed 26.5p after the company's chief executive, Marjorie Scardino, pledged to double its £1bn value within five years.

HSBC added as much as 120p at one time in the day, but the initial excitement wore off towards the close of play and it finished 44.5p better at £22.38.

A handful of financial stocks were dragged along in HSBC's wake. NatWest - which reports results today - climbed 10.5p to 870, and Standard Chartered improved 8.5p to close at £10.01.

But investors seemed to be heeding analysts' warnings that banks could be in line for a sharp correction, as others in the sector were not looking so flush.

Bank of Scotland was among the top Footsie fallers, shedding 15p to 430p. Abbey National also closed 15p poorer at 834.5p, after a feeling in the market that its results last week had not matched up to those of Lloyds and HSBC. Declines in banking stocks in the US and Europe had also unnerved the financial sector, analysts said.

Among other blue chips, Bass added 8p to 842.5p despite JD Wetherspoon's decision to ban alcopops. ICI



MARKET REPORT

CATHY NEWMAN

firmed 5p to £10.20 on reports that a \$400m joint venture in Shanghai had been approved. And despite a bearish note from Société Générale, Roll-Royce edged up 1p to 237p.

The biggest Footsie loser by far was British Airways, which plummeted by 30p to 610p after the company revealed that strikes by cabin crew would cost £125m in the first half of the year.

Pharmaceuticals, which have been up and down like a yo-yo in recent weeks, were back in the doldrums again after negative press comment over the weekend. Cortec International ended 11p poorer at 151.5p after reports that a

competitor was developing a rival drug for osteoporosis. And despite Zeneqa's announcement that its schizophrenia drug, Seroquel, had been approved, the company eased 16.5p to £20.02p.

Two drugs minnows did buck the sector's downward trend, though. Shire Pharmaceuticals jumped 8p to 249.5p on news of its £113m acquisition of the US-based Richmond Pharmaceutical Company, and Oxford Molecular firmed 3.5p after its interim results pleasantly surprised analysts.

Water stocks were also on the slide yesterday, as traders continued to fret about the Government's decision at the

end of last week to refer Pacific Corp's bid for Energy Group to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. A bearish note from HSBC James Capel did not help matters, and analysts said investors were taking profits after a good run for the sector. Thames Water finished 9p off at 776.5p; Wessex Water dropped 16.5p to 462.5p; and Anglian Water joined the slippery slope, shedding 19.5p to 771.5p.

Among the second-liners, Telewest Communications was one of the best performers, after confirmation that it was in preliminary merger talks with NTL, the US cable company. Telewest added 4p to 83p.

While Telewest was on the rise, Flextech, the cable and satellite programme supplier, was floundering after a press report that its chief executive, Roger Luard, was to leave the company. Flextech issued a statement denying the story,

but it nevertheless ended 17p poorer at 636p.

Investors were also keen on Amersham International, which is shortly to announce the completion of the fusion of its biotechnology division with Pharmacia & Upjohn. The company has also increased its clout recently with the £1.8bn merger with Norway's Nycomed. Amersham rose 57.5p to £19.82.

Elsewhere, a sharp increase in pre-tax profits at Filtronic sent shares soaring 19p to 394p, buoyed by optimistic noises from Kleinwort Benson, Merrill Lynch, and its own house broker, Panmure Gordon. And an "add" note from NatWest nudged More Group up 2p to 593.5p.

Viglen, the personal computer company spun off from Amstrad, made its debut yesterday, placed at 72.5p. But it lost ground during the day, and closed 8p down at 64.5p.

Regent Inns called time on its investment in Surrey Free Inns, selling its 5.5 per cent holding in the AIM-listed company for 465p a share. Regent, which jumped 13.5p to close at 278.5p, made £1.55m on the sale, and said it would use the cash to fund its expansion plans. Surrey Free Inns, which many industry observers had expected to become a bid target for Regent, lost 5p to 469p.

Colt Telecommunications surged 21p to an all-time high of 388.5p, on news that it had signed an interconnect agreement with France Telecom. The company, which is expected to complete a similar deal in Germany within a month, announces second-quarter results next week. Dealers said heavy buying on Friday in the US - where Colt is quoted on Nasdaq - had also helped.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex rights = Ex dividend; Ex all = Ex all United Securities Market; a suspended up = Partly Paid; pm = Part Paid; Shares = a.m. Stock

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 123 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 - Real-time	01	Starting Rate	04	Privatisation Issues	36
UK Stock Market Report	01	Bullion Report	05	Water Shares	39
UK Company News	02	Wall St Report	20	Electricity Shares	40
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	21	High Street Banks	41

Anyone with a time-of-day telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including the facilities, phone 0891 123 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 472 4378 (9.00am - 5.00pm).

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
BT	23,000	Shell	9,000	Unilever	8,000	Roll-Royce	5,000
BT	23,000	Shell	9,000	Unilever	8,000	Roll-Royce	5,000
BT	23,000	Shell	9,000	Unilever	8,000	Roll-Royce	5,000
BT	23,000	Shell	9,000	Unilever	8,000	Roll-Royce	5,000

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 4895.7 down 2.6	11.00 4895.0 up 0.7	14.00 4887.8 down 7.2
09.00 4895.7 down 2.6	12.00 4895.3 down 0.3	15.00 4885.9 down 1.9
10.00 4894.6 down 1.1	13.00 4890.0 up 0.7	Close 4885.7 down 0.8

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Takeover talks at Country Casuals fall through

Andrew Yates

The fortunes of the troubled Country Casuals women's clothes retailer took another turn yesterday when the company admitted that takeover talks with a rival, believed to be the Alexon womenswear group, had fallen through and sent the share price into a spin.

The group, which has been the subject of numerous bid approaches over the past few years, now plans to remain independent. However, the announcement opens the door for Mark Bunce, a founder and former chief executive of the company, to relaunch a bid for the group.

Tom Adam, chairman of Country Casuals, indicated that the offer for the group was simply pitched too low.

"Our principal shareholders felt that our company was worth more," he said.

Country Casuals is not in talks with Mr Bunce at the moment but Mr Adam did not rule out future takeover discussions.

Talks with Mr Bunce, who owns nearly 11 per cent of the company, collapsed in June when he failed to come up with a definite offer for the business and other groups indicated their interest in the company.

Mr Bunce and his wife Christina, a fellow founder of Country Casuals, left the group by mutual agreement at the end of June, having earlier resigned from the board after rejecting Country Casuals' plans to sell Elvi and Lerosse, two loss-making subsidiaries, to management buyout teams. Mr Adam confirmed that Mr and Mrs Bunce had received compensation on leaving the group but declined to reveal how much they were paid.

Analysts speculate that Mr Bunce would have to offer more than 140p a share for the group. That is the price that former chairman John Shannon was willing to pay for the company when he launched an unsuccessful £27m hostile bid two years ago. But some observers

believe Mr Bunce may have difficulty in raising the sort of capital required to secure a takeover.

Mr Bunce was unavailable for comment yesterday.

Country Casuals will be left to concentrate on its core retail brand, which has had a chequered history in the past few years. Operating profits from this division fell from more than £3.5m in 1995 to £3.1m in the year to last January. "We didn't provide clothes that our customers wanted. We got it wrong. But we are confident about this year. Our new ranges have been well received," said Mr Adam yesterday. The company announced that like-for-like sales for the first six months to 26 July were running ahead 8 per cent on last year.

Country Casuals has been a poor performer since it was floated at 130p a share in 1992. Its share price slumped 20p to 113.5p on yesterday's news, valuing the group at less than £22m.

Silver Shield buys 80% stake in Swansea for £100

Swansea City is to become the latest football club to join the stock market, alongside the likes of Manchester United, Newcastle, Sunderland, and Aston Villa.

Silver Shield Group, the Coventry-based replacement windscreen company, announced yesterday it had signed a deal to buy 80 per cent of the club for just £100 and take over some £1.4m worth of debts.

Doug Sharpe, Swansea's chairman, has agreed to sell the stake through his holding company, Enterline, and will resign from the club's board after the deal goes through.

Robin Sharpe, chief executive, will stay on the board, joined by Neil McClure, Silver Shield's chairman.

Apart from the £100 purchase price for the stake, Silver Shield is paying £449,900 to take over loans and interest of £1.4m owed to another of Mr Sharpe's companies. Silver Shield is also paying £25,000 to cover loans to the club from Mal Griffiths, one of the directors.

To fund the deal Silver Shield, which came to the stock market in spring 1996, is raising £400,000 by issuing 11.4 million new shares at 3.5p each. The group's share price slipped yesterday from 4p to 3.75p on news of the proposed acquisition and the accompanying rights issue. One of Mr Sharpe's



Doug Sharpe: Will resign after the deal goes through

companies will pay £50,000 for 1.4 million shares, which it cannot sell for a year.

Swansea City, which is managed by the ex-Liverpool midfielder, Jan Molby, plays in the third division of the Football League and narrowly missed promotion at the end of last season following a play-off at Wembley.

Mr McClure said he was attracted by the chance to build

an all-seat stadium and leisure complex close to the centre of Swansea which would provide added income for investors.

Mr McClure said he hoped negotiations on the stadium would be concluded in up to eight weeks. He explained: "We have been looking for some time for opportunities to acquire valuable assets at reasonable prices to add to our Silver Shield Screen subsidiary."

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
BA (01)	2,220m (2.10m)	220m (150m)	15.3p (11.9p)	-
British Telecom (01)	48.0m (33.5m)	4.1m (2.2m)	6.80p (5.59p)	1.25p (1.0p)
HSBC (01)	-	2,620m (2.32m)	65.30p (50.14p)	20p (15p)
Wendy Securities (01)	-	4.16m (2.94m)	15.1p (8.7p)	6.3p (5.8p)
New London Capital (01)	-	8.52m (3.85m)	8.8p (4.84p)	6.0p (3.0p)
Ordnance Survey (01)	1,000 (-)	-1.25m (-)	-2.3p (-)	-
Ordnance Survey (01)	6.17m (4.35m)	877,000 (550,000)	4.1p (1.7p)	-
Pearson (01)	957.5m (938.6m)	80.7m (30.2m)	11.1p (2.9p)	7.5p (-)
Telecom (01)	12.08m (10.56m)	4.025m (3.035m)	7.8p (5.8p)	2.2p (2.0p)

(01) - First (0) - 12m (0) - Nine months

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Scardino's grand vision is blurry

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive, has outlined her grand vision for the future. She wants to achieve double-digit earnings per share growth every year and to double the value of the company over the next five years, no less. That looks easier said than done.

For a start, despite years of reshaping, Pearson remains a sprawling conglomerate spanning leisure businesses such as Madame Tussauds and Alton Towers, a plethora of TV and publishing interests and even an investment bank, Lazard. The synergies between these businesses appear few and far between and Pearson continues to be run more like a quasi-investment trust than an actively managed company.

Ms Scardino's answer is to overhaul Pearson's structure and integrate the remaining businesses. But specific plans are thin on the ground. Businesses will go, although she will not say which, and acquisitions are on the cards, although she will not say where. Ms Scardino will also have her work cut out to address Pearson's poor margins. In all of its three main divisions, information, education and entertainment, Pearson's margins are at least five percentage points below its peers.

That said, Ms Scardino has got off to an encouraging start. Pre-tax profits for the six months to June have jumped from £30m to £81m. The figures were muddled by £18.6m worth of write-offs last year at Mindscape, Pearson's troubled US software business, and this year by start-up losses at Channel 5, in which Pearson has a 24 per cent stake, and a £5.9m hit from the strong pound.

Even so, underlying operating profits almost doubled to £65.5m from £33.5m, thanks to a strong performance from the Financial Times. The pink paper's circulation is up and it plans to capture a chunk of the US market. Of course Pearson still has more than its fair share of problem businesses. Mindscape, its most disastrous acquisition of recent years, is still losing money hand over fist and a fraud unearthed this year at Penguin's US publishing division will cost £100m. However both these potential disasters appear to be under control. Mindscape could make a profit in the second half and Penguin's new management has swung into action to limit damage.

Ms Scardino's confident statement helped push the shares up 26.5p to 692.5p yesterday. Analysts forecast current year profits of around £300m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e

ratio of 19. It is difficult to value Pearson until more of Ms Scardino's plans are known. If Pearson can meet her targets, the shares look cheap. But until her new strategy becomes clearer the shares remain fairly priced for now.

Shire focuses on buying Richwood

Shire Pharmaceuticals chief executive Rolf Stahl is not one to let the grass grow under his feet. Less than six months after taking over up to \$100m (£62m) for the acquisition of Pharmavene, a US drug development company, Shire is Richwood Pharmaceuticals, another US pharmaceutical group, whose main products are "treatments" for unruly children.

Richwood has built an impressive record on the strength of DextroStat and Adderall, its two drugs for so-called attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

In the space of three years, the group has turned pre-tax losses of \$873,000

on sales of just \$3.74m into profits of \$1.7m on sales which have ballooned to \$15.3m in the latest full-year to December.

The figures have been transformed by last year's launch of Adderall, which in the space of 15 months has captured 5 per cent of a \$457m market in the US.

Along with DextroStat, Richwood claims to have won 7 per cent of the market in the first five months of this year, partly, it would appear, at the expense of Medeva's generic drug methylphenidate.

Richwood's sales should hit \$40m this year, with profits, already warrented at \$7.5m for the latest half year, set to soar accordingly. Even though market growth has slowed to around a third of the 20 to 30 per cent typical of the recent past, owning the fastest-growing drug in the category clearly has exciting potential.

But it is not without its risks. Treating a behavioural problem with drugs remains controversial and, because their old patents have expired, Richwood's products are potentially exposed to competition.

Shire has convincing answers to these questions, while Richwood's 65-

strong salesforce will be useful for selling Pharmavene's products and will bring useful cash flow and earnings.

Even if competition means Richwood's sales will peak by 2000, Lehman Brothers reckons Shire could be boasting profits of £11m this year and puts an underlying value of 400p on the shares. Up 8p at 249.5p, they are good value.

Market ready to forgive Filtronic

Filtronic Comtek, a maker of hi-tech parts for mobile telephones, well illustrates the dangers of investing in small companies. After a storming first year on the stock market, the company's heavy reliance on one customer, namely Motorola of the US, sent the company and its shares into a flat spin.

The problem centred on the code division multiple access technology on which Motorola has based its latest generation of digital mobile telephones. First technical hitches and now financing problems have slowed adoption of the technology in the huge US market. Given that over half Filtronic's sales are made to Motorola, it was hardly surprising the delay should lead to two profits warnings last year and an absence of first-half profits. Since then the group has gone on to lose its new chief executive, Greg Hey-Shipton.

But the market seems to be in a mood to forgive and forget, marking the shares up 19p to 394p yesterday after Filtronic unveiled pre-tax profits up a quarter to £4.06m for the year to May.

The figures were in line with analysts' reduced expectations, but more importantly, the company remains bullish about the future. Orders have nearly doubled over the year to £24.7m and have since risen to £37m, nearly 80 per cent of last year's sales. Forecasts suggest the number of mobile phone chatters could rise by 2.5 times to 300 million by 2002, yet analysts reckon Filtronic still has a lowly 6 to 7 per cent of its addressable market of around \$1bn.

The group is gearing up to meet demand with a massive expansion of production in the UK, but claims gearing should not rise above the year-end figure of 45 per cent. Even so, the shares are high enough on a forward p/e of 25, assuming £10.5m profits this year.

Galaxy chief ousted without payoff

Clifford German

The chief executive of Galaxy Media Corporation has been ousted after a change of strategy brought about since the appointment of Robert Stigwood, the impresario, as non-executive chairman a couple of months ago.

John Webber, who only became the executive head of the television programme maker and entertainment business last October, is not receiving any compensation for loss of office. His departure was the result of a significant shift in the company's planned future development, said Christopher Moran, the company's vice-chairman, leading shareholder, and the well-known former Lloyd's name.

Mr Stigwood, a long-standing friend of Mr Moran, also stands to become a significant shareholder after having been granted options over 350,000 shares. The company has 3.5 million shares in issue, and exercise of the options would give Mr Stigwood a 9 per cent stake in the company.

Galaxy said it would concentrate on its interests in film, TV, music and stage promotions, and added that the business of managing sports events and artists which Mr Webber brought into the company when he joined Galaxy would be retained.

Mr Webber, a former vice-chairman of Mark McCormack's International Management Group, injected his own BM International business interests and bought 150,000 shares at 135p when he joined the company last year.

The share price closed unchanged at 160p on the Seal market yesterday, valuing the company, which has yet to make a profit, at around £5.6m.

Galaxy paid Mr Webber, who did not have a contract entitling him to compensation, a consultancy fee of £55,000 a year and a profit-related bonus which lapses with his departure. Mr Webber went on holiday last Friday and his future plans are unknown, according to his spokeswoman yesterday.

Galaxy was created from a reverse takeover of CSC Investment Trust by Mike Mansfield Television less than two years ago. Mr Moran owns about 29 per cent of the company, Mr Mansfield about 15 per cent.

HSBC Holdings plc

1997 Interim Results

Comment by Sir William Purves, HSBC Group Chairman

"I am pleased to report that in the first half of 1997 HSBC Holdings continued to generate a strong return on shareholders' funds, producing attributable profit of £1,757 million, 11 per cent ahead of the comparable figure in 1996, despite the adverse exchange rate translation impact of stronger sterling. Our capital strength enabled us to make major investments while maintaining dividend growth."

"Our Board of Directors has declared a first interim dividend of 20 pence per share, an increase of 33 per cent compared with 15 pence declared in 1996."

"Operating profit rose by 19 per cent to £2,402 million mainly as a result of asset growth in Asia, the United Kingdom and North America which more than compensated for the pressure on lending margins. Credit quality remained high and cost discipline was maintained."

"We believe that the investments made in the first half of 1997, many of which were explained in our 1996 Annual Report and Accounts, will broaden the Group's platform for growth into the next century."

"The smooth transition of Hong Kong to a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China at midnight on 30 June was an important milestone. Our confidence remains high in the economic strength of the Hong Kong SAR, in its role as a financial centre and in our position within the Hong Kong financial community."

"I am confident that our committed employees, capital strength, continuing technological development and cost vigilance will enable us to meet the challenges of increasing competition and very rapid changes in our markets and turn these into benefits for our customers and shareholders around the world."

Half-year to	30 June 1997	30 June 1996
Profit before tax	£2,623m	£2,321m
Profit attributable to shareholders	£1,757m	£1,586m
Earnings per share	65.93p	60.14p
Dividends per share	20.00p	15.00p
Capital resources	£24,504m	£23,403m

First half 1997 over first half 1996

- Pre-tax profit up 13% and attributable profit up 11%
- Pre-tax profit up 21% and attributable profit up 19% in Hong Kong dollars
- Earnings per share up 10%
- Dividends per share up 33%
- Total capital ratio 14.2% and tier 1 capital ratio 9.4%

The 1997 Interim Report will be sent to shareholders on Friday, 15 August 1997 and copies may be obtained from Group Public Affairs at the address below.

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Web: www.hsbcgroup.com

Bond yields may be thought of as having two components: an element which is necessary to compensate investors for what they think inflation is going to be; and the real interest

Bull market

Year	1994 to present (Millions)	1984 to 1988 (Millions)	1926 to 1930 (Millions)
1926	-	-	200
1930	-	-	240
1984	-	200	-
1988	-	240	-
1994	200	-	-
1994	240	-	-

yields and inflation expectations. The latter effect has been strengthened by the growing influence and independence of central banks. However, even if markets are

low inflation, it is less clear that they have factored in the concomitant reduction in long-run growth rates. A crash of previous proportions would require the double whammy of a rise in real bond yields from their current historic low together with a knock to growth expectations. A very possible, if not probable,

Mr Kheraj, a ludicrously precocious 33, spent 10 years with Salomon Brothers before joining Fleming, where he narrowly missed Mr Harrison during the

Incidentally, Pearson's new cathedral-like complex for telly was originally supposed to cost £15m and ended up at £40m. Ms Scardino has taken this on the chin. She confided to me yesterday that she'd already bought 10,000 shares in Pearson at 749p

man of Abbey National. Lord Tugendhat is famous for knowing virtually everyone that matters, having been an MP, a big cheese at the Civil Aviation Authority and a *grand fromage* in the European Union. Most impressive, I think, is the fact that he wrote a

Marjorie Scardino, chief executive of Pearson, discovered this week that owning a TV studio can be a double-edged sword. She

[illegible]

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INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

When the new league season opens on August 9th a vast array of footballing talent will be on parade for the first time.

Arsenal and Chelsea have been the busiest clubs in the overseas market, with Marc Overmars the most expensive recruit. The two London clubs can be expected to mount a strong challenge. Liverpool and Newcastle United will also be fighting for the title.

However, Alex Ferguson's men will again be the team to beat. With the signings of Teddy Sheringham and Cesci Suvri from Brazil they are again the bookmakers' favourites to win the title.

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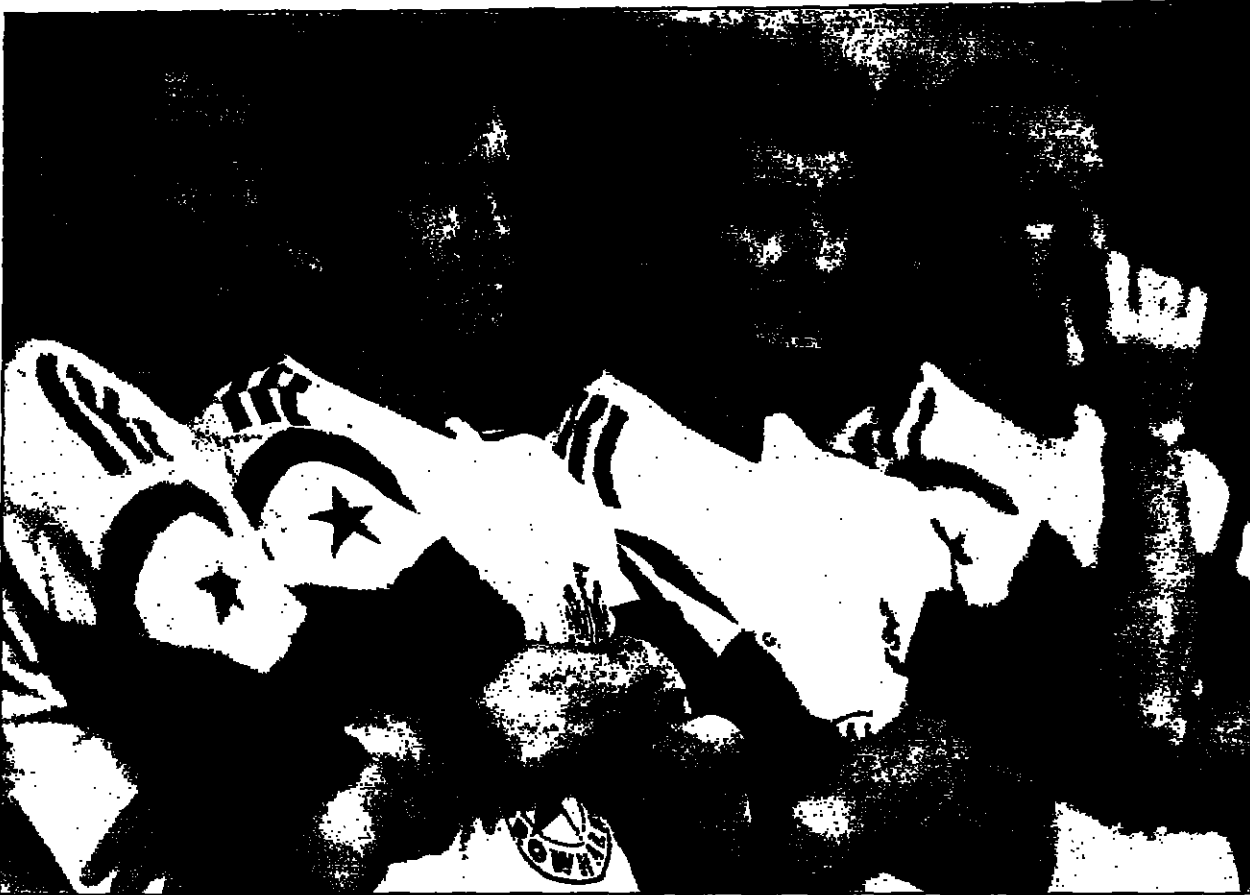
FORMATION A. 4-4-2
4 Defenders, 4 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION B. 4-3-3
4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers

FORMATION C. 5-3-2
5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION D. 3-5-2
3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

Once you have chosen your formation and team name pick your team of 11 players and 1 manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under and their total value must not go over £40million. Having made a note of your team dial our registration hotline. Please try to use a tone telephone - one which makes tone noises when you dial, although pulse telephones can be used to register your team.



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Successful assist 1 point.
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Every time one of your players scores you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference at the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, as judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

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INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE (£m)
GOALKEEPERS				455	Cox	Bol	2.5	560	Lundekvam	Sou	1.2	679	Sharpe	Lee	3.5	845	Whelan	Cov	3.0
300	Seaman	Ars	4.0	456	Elliot	Bol	3.0	563	Scales	Tot	3.4	680	Ribeiro	Lee	1.5	846	Huckerby	Cov	3.5
303	Lukic	Ars	1.0	457	Fairclough	Bol	2.0	564	Campbell	Tot	4.0	683	Haaland	Lee	2.5	847	Soltvedt	Cov	1.5
304	Manninger	Ars	3.0	458	Taggart	Bol	2.5	565	Calderwood	Tot	2.9	684	Parker	Lei	2.5	848	Lightbourne	Cov	1.5
305	Bosnich	AV	4.0	459	Bergsson	Bol	1.5	566	Austin	Tot	2.2	685	Taylor	Lei	1.6	849	Dyer	Cry	2.0
306	Oakes	AV	1.5	460	Duberry	Chel	3.0	567	Edinburgh	Tot	1.6	686	Izzett	Lei	2.1	850	Freedman	Cry	2.0
307	Watson	Bar	1.0	463	Petrescu	Che	3.0	568	Carr	Tot	1.2	687	Lennon	Lei	3.2	853	Ndahi	Cry	1.0
308	Lesse	Bar	1.0	464	Lambourde	Che	3.0	569	Mabbutt	Tot	1.5	688	Guppy	Lei	1.7	854	Shipperley	Cry	2.0
309	Flowers	Bla	5.2	465	Leboeuf	Che	5.0	570	Dicks	WH	3.5	689	Barnes	Liv	3.0	855	Ward	Der	2.5
330	Filan	Bla	1.5	466	Sinclair	Che	2.5	573	Rieper	WH	2.7	690	Redknapp	Liv	5.2	856	Sturridge	Der	5.0
333	Branagan	Bol	1.2	467	Daish	Cov	2.7	574	Hall	WH	3.0	693	McManaman	Liv	5.9	857	Wanchope	Der	3.0
334	De Goeij	Che	1.0	468	Shaw	Cov	2.2	575	Potts	WH	1.5	694	Thomas	Liv	3.0	858	Ferguson	Eve	6.5
335	Grodas	Che	1.0	469	Burrows	Cov	2.2	576	Ferdinand	WH	2.5	695	Leonhardsen	Liv	4.0	859	Barmby	Eve	4.5
336	Ogrizovic	Cov	2.2	470	Haworth	Cov	1.5	577	Impey	WH	2.2	696	Giggs	Man	7.4	860	Deane	Lee	3.0
337	Hedman	Cov	1.0	473	Edworthy	CP	1.5	578	Turner	WH	2.0	697	Beckham	Man	7.0	863	Lilley	Lee	1.5
338	Nash	CP	1.0	474	Gordon	CP	2.0	579	Perry	Wim	4.0	698	Keane	Man	7.0	864	Hasslebank	Lee	3.0
339	Day	CP	1.0	475	Muscat	CP	1.0	580	Cunningham	Wim	1.5	699	Butt	Man	7.0	865	Claridge	Lei	3.5
340	Poom	Der	1.2	476	Tuttle	CP	2.0	583	Thatcher	Wim	2.0	700	Poborski	Man	3.5	866	Heskey	Lei	5.5
343	Hoult	Der	1.6	477	Linighan	CP	2.0	584	McAllister	Wim	1.5	703	Lee	New	3.6	867	Fowler	Liv	9.5
344	Southall	Eve	3.0	478	Roberts	CP	3.0	585	Kimble	Wim	1.5	704	Batty	New	3.8	868	Berger	Liv	4.0
345	Gerrard	Eve	1.5	479	Hredresson	CP	1.0	MIDFIELD				705	Gillespie	New	2.5	869	Owen	Liv	2.5
346	Martyn	Lee	3.3	480	Stimac	Der	3.3	600	Platt	Ars	2.5	706	Beardsley	New	2.0	870	Scholes	Man	6.0
347	Beeny	Lee	1.2	483	C Powell	Der	1.8	603	Parlour	Ars	2.4	707	Ketsbars	New	2.0	873	Cole	Man	6.2
348	Keller	Lei	2.5	484	Laursen	Der	1.5	605	Vieira	Ars	4.5	708	Blinker	SW	2.5	874	Solskjaer	Man	7.0
349	Poole	Lei	1.5	485	Erano	Der	2.5	606	Overmars	Ars	6.0	709	Hyde	SW	1.8	875	Sheringham	Man	5.0
350	James	Liv	3.5	486	Pheasant	Eve	1.9	607	M Rodriguez	Ars	2.0	730	Whittingham	SW	1.7	876	Nevland	Man	2.0
353	Warner	Liv	1.0	487	Short	Eve	3.0	608	J Taylor	AV	1.9	733	Carbone	SW	3.0	877	Shearer	New	10.0
354	Schmeichel	Man	5.5	488	Watson	Eve	2.7	609	Townsend	AV	3.2	734	Magilton	Sou	2.4	878	Asprilla	New	7.4
355	Van Der Gouw	Man	1.2	489	Unsworth	Eve	3.0	630	Draper	AV	4.1	735	Slater	Sou	1.5	879	Ferdinand	New	5.0
356	Given	New	2.5	490	Hinchcliffe	Eve	3.5	633	Marcelle	Bar	2.0	736	Oakley	Sou	1.2	880	Tomasson	New	4.0
357	Hislop	New	2.5	493	Bilic	Eve	4.0	634	Bullock	Bar	1.2	737	Anderton	Tot	6.0	883	Gudjonsson	New	2.0
358	Pressman	SW	3.0	494	Kelly	Lee	3.6	635	Redfern	Bar	1.5	738	Fox	Tot	3.5	884	Humphreys	She	2.5
359	Taylor	Sou	1.8	495	Wetherall	Lee	2.5	636	Eaden	Bar	1.2	739	Howells	Tot	3.2	885	Booth	She	3.5
360	Beasant	Sou	1.0	496	Molenaar	Lee	2.5	637	Tinkler	Bar	1.0	740	Ginola	Tot	3.5	886	Hirst	She	3.5
363	Walker	Tot	3.4	497	Dorigo	Lee	1.2	638	Donis	Bla	3.0	743	Sinton	Tot	3.0	887	Le Tissier	Sou	7.0
364	Bardsen	Tot	1.0	498	Robertson	Lee	2.5	639	Wilcox	Bla	3.8	744	Nielsen	Tot	2.5	888	Evans	Sou	1.5
365	Miklosko	WH	1.5	499	Walsh	Lei	2.2	640	McKinlay	Bla	2.2	745	Williamson	WH	2.0	889	Ostenstad	Sou	3.2
366	Sullivan	Wim	2.7	500	Whitlow	Lei	1.2	643	Sherwood	Bla	3.4	746	Hughes	WH	2.0	890	Armstrong	Tot	5.9
DEFENDERS				503	Elliott	Lei	1.2	644	McKinlay	Bla	2.2	747	Moncur	WH	2.5	893	Iversen	Tot	4.0
400	Dixon	Ars	2.5	504	Watts	Lei	1.6	645	Franssen	Bol	1.5	748	Bishop	WH	2.5	894	Hartson	WH	5.0
403	Upson	Ars	2.0	505	Wright	Liv	3.0	646	Thompson	Bol	2.8	749	Berkovic	WH	2.5	895	Kitson	WH	3.5
404	Petit	Ars	4.2	506	Ruddock	Liv	3.0	647	Pollock	Bol	1.2	750	Lomas	WH	3.0	896	Holdsworth	Wim	3.5
405	Grimendi	Ars	2.7	507	Harkness	Liv	1.2	648	Sellars	Bol	1.5	753	Jones	Wim	2.8	897	Ekoku	Wim	4.0
406	Winterburn	Ars	2.5	508	Kvarme	Liv	2.5	649	Gulitt	Che	4.4	754	Earle	Wim	3.1	898	Gayle	Wim	4.0
407	Bould	Ars	2.5	509	Bjornebye	Liv	2.5	650	Di Matteo	Che	5.0	755	Ardley	Wim	2.0	899	Euell	Wim	1.5
408	Adams	Ars	4.5	530	Matteo	Liv	3.7	653	Wise	Che	3.7	756	Fear	Wim	2.0	MANAGERS			
409	Keown	Ars	4.5	533	McAteer	Liv	3.7	654	Newton	Che	2.4	757	Hughes	Wim	2.0	900	Wenger	Ars	7.5
430	Staunton	AV	3.0	534	G Neville	Man	4.2	655	P Hughes	Che	3.0	800	Bergkamp	Ars	7.5	903	Little	AV	5.0
433	Southgate	AV	5.2	535	P Neville	Man	4.2	656	Babeyaro	Che	3.0	803	Wright	Ars	7.2	904	Wilson	Bar	2.0
434	Ehiogu	AV	3.0	536	Irwin	Man	2.5	657	Telfer	Cov	1.8	804	Boamorte Per	Ars	2.0	905	Hodgson	Bla	5.0
435	Nelson	AV	1.2	537	Pallister	Man	3.0	658	Richardson	Cov	2.4	805	Yorke	AV	6.7	906	Todd	Bol	2.5
436	Wright	AV	3.0	538	May	Man	3.5	659	Rickallister	Cov	3.0	806	Joachim	AV	2.4	907	Gullitt	Che	4.5
437	Schmeica	AV	2.2	539	Johnsen	Man	3.5	660	Salsko	Cov	2.4	807	Collymore	AV	8.1	908	Strachan	Cov	3.0
438	Grayson	Bar	1.5	540	Silva	Man	4.1	663	Johansen	Cov	2.0	808	Wilkinson	Bar	1.2	909	Coppell	Cry	2.0
439	Moses	Bar	2.0	543	Albert	New	3.7	664	Simmons	Der	1.2	809	Hendrie	Bar	1.5	930	Smith	Der	2.0
440	Appleby	Bar	2.0	544	Howey	New	3.0	665	Assogovic	Der	3.0	830	Hristov	Bar	1.5	933	Kendall	Eve	2.5
443	Thompson	Bar	1.0	545	Peacock	New	3.3	666	D Powell	Der	1.2	833	Sutton	Bla	4.5	934	Graham	Lee	3.5
444	Krzan	Bar	1.0	546	Barton	New	2.2	667	Van Der Laan	Der	1.6	834	Gallacher	Bla	3.0	935	O'Neill	Lei	4.5
445	Berg	Bla	3.4	547	Beresford	New	2.2	668	Daily	Der	1.2	835	Dahlin	Bla	4.0	936	Evans	Liv	7.0
446	Le Saux	Bla	5.0	548	Blondeau	SW	2.2	669	Hunt	Der	2.0	836	McGinlay	Bol	2.2	937	Ferguson	Man	9.0
447	Coleman	Bla	3.0	549	Nolan	SW	1.9	670	Parkinson	Eve	1.8	837	Blake	Bol	2.7	938	Dalglish	New	7.0
448	Hendry	Bla	4.4	550	Atherton	SW	1.9	673	Grant	Eve	2.2	838	Zola	Che	9.0	939	Pleat	She	4.0
449	Kenna	Bla	1.9	553	Walker	SW	2.5	674	Farrally	Eve	2.0	839	Vialli	Che	3.5	940	Jones	Sou	2.5
450	Heuchoz	Bla	2.0	554	Stefanovic	SW	1.6	675	Stuart	Eve	2.5	840	M Hughes	Che	4.4	943	Francis	Tot	4.5
453	Valery	Bla	3.0	555	Newsome	SW	1.5	676	Speed	Eve	2.7	843	Tore Andre Flo	Che	3.0	944	Redknapp	WH	3.3
454	Andersson	Bla	2.5	556	Monkou	Sou	2.5	677	Bowyer	Lee	3.0	844	Dublin	Cov	3.5	945	Kinnear	Wim	4.5
				557	Dodd	Sou	1.5	678	Wallace	Lee	1.8								

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COUNTDOWN TO THE 1997-98 FOOTBALL SEASON

Youthful Watson prepares for his senior service

"Tyne-side in turmoil before Champions' League debut," screamed one of the morning headlines. Steve Watson could not help the wry smile as he pulled on his boots for training.

The afternoon he became the youngest first-teamer in Newcastle United's history, the Magpies stooped to 19th place in the old Second Division. Their share offer was falling some £7m short of its £8m target and Jim Smith, the old Bald Eagle, was hanging on to the manager's job by his claws.

"Things have changed a bit since then," Watson mused as he scanned the line-up from the November day in 1990 when he made his debut as a 16-year-old substitute at Molineux.

Rather than fretting over the form and fitness of Wayne Fereday, Darren Bradshaw and Scott Sloan and whether the next season would bring trips to Darlington and Hartlepool, turmoil for Newcastle's manager these days means working towards a European Cup tie with the inconvenience of having the world's most expensive player on the injured list.

"The last few seasons we've built up expectations so high,"

Watson acknowledged. "And a blow like Alan being injured has rocked everybody because he's the best striker in the country."

Watson would not dispute that Alan Shearer is also the best striker nurtured by Wallsend Boys' Club, although he happens to be one himself.

It was as a centre-forward that he joined Newcastle on YTS forms and his curriculum vitae includes not so much leading the line as being the line in a European tie. "The lone forager," he recalled of his role as Andy Cole's emergency stand-in in the Basque cauldron of Athletic Bilbao's San Mamés stadium three years ago.

Watson, however, will not be offering his services as a temporary replacement for Shearer when Croatia Zagreb visit Tyne-side for the opening leg of Newcastle's Champions' League qualifying tie next Wednesday night.

At the grand old age of 23, the veteran St James' Park servant (only Steve Howey has been on the books longer) hopes his days as the ultimate jack-of-all football trades are finally over.

Watson broke into the first team as an attacking midfielder

Simon Turnbull talks to Newcastle's long-serving defender who believes the picture at St James' Park is not as black and white as it is painted

and won his 12 England Under-21 caps as a right-back. He has, in fact, played in every outfield position for his home club. And there are those in the Newcastle dressing-room who reckon he qualifies as having kept goal too, citing a diving save that stopped a Tony Dorico shot but conceded a penalty to Leeds at St James' three years ago.

"Actually," Watson said, "I was a goalkeeper with the Wallsend district team at school. I can remember we got hammered by Newcastle schools in one game. They had Robbie Elliott and Lee Clark in their side."

"I was a centre-forward when I signed for Newcastle United but I didn't play many games for the youth team up front. They played me at centre-half virtually straight away and six years and about eight different positions later, I've ended up at centre-half again. I really do enjoy playing there. I felt very comfortable there at the end of last season."

Such a scenario seemed unlikely in the extreme in the early days of his working life under his third manager, Kevin Ke-

gan's opinion of him turned full circle in the 90 minutes of a home match against Tranmere in April 1992.

"I said to Stevie in the dressing-room: 'You're playing full-back against Pal Nevins today'," Keegan recalled. "Just show him inside because he'll want to go outside you."

"After five minutes he just let Nevins go inside him, Nevins crossed the ball and they were 1-0 up. After 10 minutes he did the same thing. He thought I meant let him go inside rather than just make him try to go inside instead of down the wing."

"We came in 2-1 down at half-time and I said to him: 'Get your boots off. Get in the shower. You'll never play full-back for me again'."

"He went in the shower and the physio came to me and said someone was injured. So I went in the shower and said: 'Right, come on, get your boots on. Get back out and play'. Stevie just said: 'Great'. He put his boots back on and went out and played like a full-back."

Keegan came to value Watson's talent, and to utilise his remarkable versatility to the full. "A very mature player and a

great athlete," was the ultimate Keegan verdict. "I never saw Duncan Edwards play, but people in the game keep telling me he reminds them of him."

Dalglish was so struck by Watson's maturity the first time he saw him in action - on a scouting trip to watch Brighton, Liverpool's forthcoming FA Cup opponents, in January 1991 - he laughed at those who insisted the midfielder running the show was a 16-year-old trainee.

Six years later, Dalglish has a man's job in mind for the experienced pro who earned £29 a week for his child-star duties, which included cleaning the boots of Archie Gourlay and Neil Simpson.

A new batch of recruits have arrived to fight for first-team places, and Jon Dahl Tomasson, Temur Ketsbaia, Shay Given, Stuart Pearce and Alessandro Pistone may all have opening-day roles against Sheffield Wednesday at St James' Park on Saturday.

Dalglish, though, is likely to find defensive room to accommodate the old hand who wore the Wallsend No 9 shirt after Shearer. "I am just looking for-



Steve Watson gathers his thoughts as Newcastle are knocked out of last season's UEFA Cup. Photograph: Empics

ward to the season," Watson said, never having settled in a position long enough to take one for granted. "Obviously Alan's injury has cast a bit of a shadow, but it's not all doom and gloom. Not at all. We've got our two Champions' League

qualifying games for a start. That's got to make it as exciting a season as we've had since I've been here."

More exciting, certainly, than heading towards Hartlepool with Fereday and the rest of those low-flying Magpies.

New goal for Davenport on 99 not out

Peter Davenport belongs to a generation of strikers which tends not to indulge in elaborately choreographed goal celebrations. Yet if Macclesfield Town's newly appointed player-coach scores against Torquay United on Saturday, he may be tempted to raise an imaginary cricket bat.

Finding the net on Macclesfield's Football League debut would not only be satisfying in itself. It would also bring up a century of League goals that the former England player did not expect to complete.

Four years have elapsed since Davenport advanced to 98 with Sunderland; a further 28 months since a single took him on to 99 during a loan stint with Stockport. Even Geoffrey Boycott never edged towards three figures so cautiously.

"It's been as if the captain declared the innings with me on 99 not out," Davenport chuck-

Phil Shaw meets the one-cap wonder who, at 36, is now player-coach at the League's latest recruits, Macclesfield, where he has a score to settle

led. "When I got that last goal there was a lot of publicity about my being on the brink of a hundred. Stockport had three games left and Dave Jones [the manager, now with Southampton] told me: 'Don't worry, you'll get your chance to do it'. He never played me again."

Macclesfield's promotion from the Vauxhall Conference has given Davenport more than an opportunity to reach a personal milestone. The purist style of Sammy McIlroy's side has restored his appetite for the fray. He sounds 36 going on 18, his enthusiasm as great as at any time since his heyday with Nottingham Forest and Manchester United.

Davenport's promise was immense. Blessed with deft control and a talent for turning defenders - as viewers of *Match of the Eighties* saw last week - he was initially rated on a par with Gary Lineker. And when Mark Hughes left Old Trafford for Barcelona, he was the replacement.

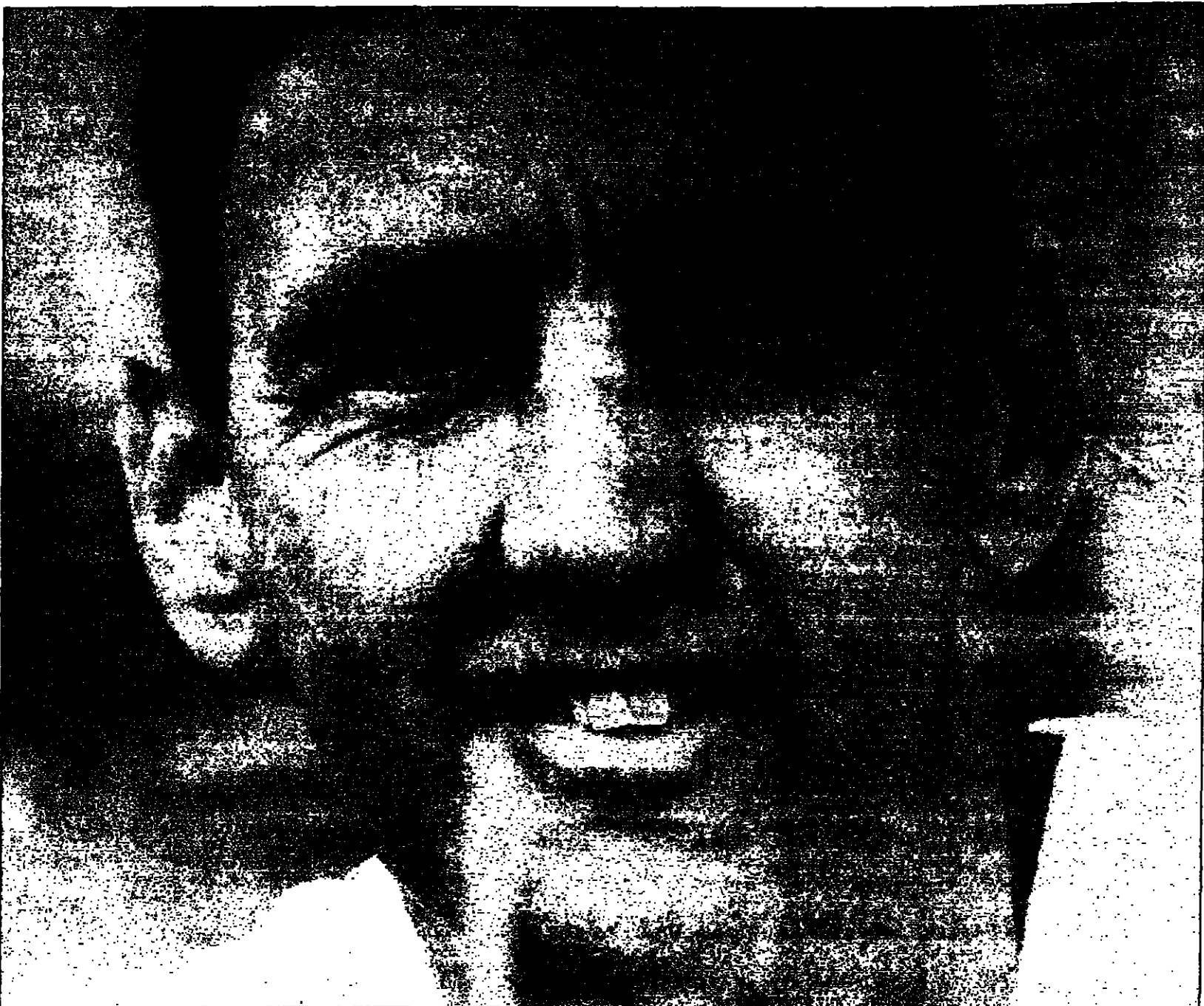
He was still with Forest when Bobby Robson picked him for the squad to play the Republic of Ireland at Wembley in 1985. "It was two days after my birthday," Davenport recalled. "Not long after I got on as substitute, Mick McCarthy tried to clear the ball and it broke to me in the inside-right channel."

"I squared it for Lineker to chip it over Jackie Bonner. That was his first goal for England. The rest is history. Go on Gary, make yourself a million while I just go and play for Airdrie and Southport!"

While the tone is self-mocking, rather than self-pitying, misfortune would play a part in Davenport's status as a one-cap wonder. A week later a hamstring injury forced him out of the impending World Cup qualifier in Romania. He never did wear the pin-striped summer tour suit for which the FA had him measured.

Fate seemed to have switched sides when, the following year, Ron Atkinson paid £575,000 to take him to United, where McIlroy had been among his adolescent heroes. Within six months, however, Alex Ferguson took over and re-signed Hughes.

Davenport went on to play for Middlesbrough and Sunderland before circumstances led him to Scotland. "I decided to find a club where they didn't have so many overnight stops. My boy had just been



...this is now: Davenport, in the Third Division with Macclesfield, has a personal milestone to pass

Photograph: Peter Jay

born, yet every other Friday, at 5pm, I'd be sat in the Sunderland coach in a traffic jam on the A1 at Wetherby."

Spells with Airdrieonians and St Johnstone allowed him to see more of his family - "we hardly ever played anyone more than an hour away from our home in Edinburgh" - but Davenport felt he had unfinished business south of the border.

After a permanent move to Stockport fell through, he joined Southport. He was the Conference club's assistant manager, only to be overlooked when the senior post became vacant. Having told the chairman he did not want to go back to being just a player, he was released.

"I was thinking of packing it in because I wasn't enjoying my football. Then Sammy came in for me and I realised I'd landed on my feet. I thought: 'This is fantastic - I want to go on playing as long as I can'."

Macclesfield took the championship playing the type of football Davenport was schooled in. "I've been fortunate to have played for some good managers. I rate Brian Clough as the best - his management was second to none. The way he used psychology was incredible."

"More importantly, he always played the right way. He'd place a ball in the middle of the room and say: 'That's precious, look after it, don't give it away'. 'Sammy's not as outspoken

as out of a reluctance to tempt fate. 'Nobody knows how we'll cope with the physical demands, though we've got players who'll surprise people with their quality'."

For instance? "Neil Sorvel in midfield. Crewe let him go but he's a superb passer. Steve Payne and Neil Howarth are excellent centre-backs. Then there's Steve Wood, our top scorer, who could become the oldest man to make his League debut - at 34."

Wood has given up his job as a JCB driver to go full-time. McIlroy's small squad, recruited on a shoestring, also includes a recently retired postman, life-guard and gardener. Davenport, who will continue studying for a sports science degree at

Manchester University, was delighted to commit himself to a first-ever campaign at Third Division level.

That has meant the kind of pre-season regime he thought was behind him, and which is now his responsibility. "Training's been very enjoyable, honestly," he said. "The spirit at Macclesfield is fantastic. Three years ago they won the title and weren't allowed into the League. It's mostly the same lads, so there's a real feeling of 'let's make it count this time'."

Talking of counting, Davenport is confident of troubling the scorers in the coming weeks. He will not, it is safe to assume, be unduly concerned if the elusive goal is not quite *Match of the Nineties* material.



That was then... Peter Davenport makes his only appearance for England, in 1985. Photograph: Colorsport

Most clubs are having to look at innovative strategies to lure fans brainwashed into believing life is only good at the top

Ask a salesman for his vision of Utopia and he is sure to reply along these lines: give me a product that no one else can offer, that everybody wants, at a price affordable to all.

In post-war Britain in the late Forties and Fifties, professional football was such a product. It monopolised Saturday afternoon entertainment. Capacity crowds packed sardine-like on vast open terraces week after week after week. Perceived to be good value for money, the masses did not appear unduly worried by the poor facilities and the cramped confines of their temporary living quarters. After all, hadn't watching football always been like this?

In far more comfortable surroundings - the padded-seat luxury of the directors' box - the privileged few counted their coins. Football admission could hardly have been deemed expensive, (the mass audience were, after all, the workers) but, in an era when the players earned peanuts in relation

to the receipts amassed, it must have been halcyon days for your average, extremely rich football director.

For men of vision, this surely had to be the opportune time to reinvest the excess. Antiquated stadiums, so desperately in need of modernisation on the grounds of both improved comfort and safety, were largely left to crumble. Implementing a pricing policy that rewarded the loyalty of the fans by pegging prices was overlooked in favour of a relentless series of unnecessary and downright greedy admission hikes.

Blinded by pound signs, the money men failed to see the arrival of the opposition. Living standards were rising, so too were people's expectations. Shops were, by now, stacked with attractive goods. People buying a car for the first time could, come the weekend, spread their wings and explore the countryside.

Television, now within the budget of the working classes, accounted for a high percentage of stayaway fans

who preferred, instead, the comfort of their own homes and the novelty of an afternoon devoted to a whole variety of televised sports.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the crowds started to drift away. A trickle became a flood as football lost its mass appeal. Wringing their hands, the directors attempted to make good the shortfall with even greater price increases.

Crowds continued their downward plunge through the hoodlaramed Sixties, Seventies and early Eighties, with the game's lowest ebb being reached in the quite appalling wake of the triple tragedies of Bradford, Brussels and Hillsborough. Hand-wringing time again as the authorities looked to the heavens for some divine intervention.

Winging in to answer their prayers was Sky supreme Rupert Murdoch. By toe-poking a multimillion pot of gold towards the desperate and the needy, Murdoch has in all probability contributed

Garry Nelson asks if the unstoppable rise of television is pricing the smaller clubs out of existence

more than any other individual to the long-term viability of the English game.

Backed not only by his huge investment but also by the strongest promotional campaign the sport has ever seen, the professional game is once more in public demand. Increased demand invariably leads to a shortage of supply, which in turn leads to increased prices.

The top clubs have not been slow in taking advantage. Ticket prices have risen sharply. For a family man taking his two children on a footballing day out, it is now necessary to shell out around £70 and that is without the compulsory trip to a fast-food outlet.

Not of great concern perhaps to those riding high on the back of football's current fashionability. But just a couple of rungs below, clubs are increasingly having to look at innovative pricing strategies in an attempt to lure fans brainwashed into believing that life is only good at the top.

Norwich City were able to attract crowds of several thousand to unattractive reserve fixtures by offering free admission to families and friends. Not much chance of adding to the bank balance there, but the hope is that a high percentage of potential paying customers will return over and over again in the not too distant future.

Swindon Town have, once again, implemented a price increase this season. Should they, however, fail to make the play-offs, season-ticket holders will be refunded the cost of the increase.

These two clubs do have the added saleability asset of proximity

to the big time. When you are down amongst the dead men, being innovative with your pricing policy is tantamount to committing financial suicide. Just ask the former Torquay chairman, Mike Bateson. He came to the painful, inevitable conclusion that regardless of price promotions - two tickets for one, kids for a quid, child season tickets for a tenner - the base for increasing support sufficiently to make ends meet was not there. He then had the unenviable task of asking perhaps the most loyal couple of thousand fans in the country to cough up an extra £2 a match for the privilege of watching what was, at that particular time, the worst team in the country.

Eight pounds a throw, that's three home games for a month's Sky subscription. Come midweek when the lows come scudding in from the West bringing high winds and torrential rain, the choice between lowly Torquay and the other United really seems too close to call.

Murdoch's £60,000 a year donation doesn't nearly begin to offset the loss.

For Torquay read the vast majority of Nationwide League clubs. As demand grows for the best seats in the Premiership house, the little leaguers are left to ponder how best they can survive.

A drastic price reduction may be the answer, but such has been the effectiveness of Murdoch's marketing strategy, there is still no guarantee that this will be enough to tempt those hooked on his sporting satellite show to watch live football again.

As the recently unemployed salesman said: "You're only as good as the product you sell." Especially when it's vastly over-priced. Heed the warning, Premiership clubs: Or have we already reached the stage where the fans are no longer as important as the television income, ensuring that our game - the people's game - will endure.

Greene and Jones sprint into obscurity

themselves with tattoos, pick fights with the media or chew on ear lobes. Only Carl Lewis has used athletics to become a sporting superstar in his own land. But even he owes his American celebrity at least as much to a loud mouth as to his brilliance at the chosen trade.

For the underdog who else lingers in the memory among American athletes since the war. Incomparable like Ed Moses and Al Oerter? Not really. Immortality requires a dash of the outlandish — the black power salute by Tommy Smith and John Carlos, Bob Beamon's freakish 2.20 long jump at the 1968 Olympic Games in 1968, and "the City of Dreadful Night" Dick Fosbury

quickly revolutionised high jumping.

Britain still cherishes heroes like Bannister and Chataway, Coe and Oerter, Daley Thompson and Linford Christie. Not even shocking gold shoes, however, are unlikely to keep Michael Johnson from obscurity once these World Championships are over. Thus it was after Atlanta, despite his 19.32sec 200 metres, in its way as unbelievable as the Beamon long jump 28 years earlier; and thus it will be after Athens, when he will be the brother world champion. Let Maurice Greene and Marion Jones be warned. If they want to become famous, they're in the wrong game.



Unlike those major TV sports of American football and baseball, which are virtually unique to North America, track and field involves competition against foreigners. Now foreigners are only of the scantiest interest to an irredeemably chauvinist American public. To make matters worse, they have a frequent habit of beating their US rivals. So how do you sell that? One answer would be word records, but even network mega-bucks cannot guarantee that. What's a 9.86sec 100m if it's not a record? Answer: as uninteresting and unpalatable to American viewers as a goalless draw at football (sorry, soccer).

And so to the last ratings hope of track and field—an extra dash of “charisma” (read the antics of a Denis Rodman or Mike Tyson). Alas, athletics of ferals neither blood nor human contact. Its greatest practitioners tend to be modest and retiring folk who do not cover

Abstract

A spectator has an unfettered view of a men's 800m heat on Sunday Photograph: Reuters

Primo Nebiolo, the International Amateur Athletic president, yesterday attacked the Athens authorities for not promoting the World Championships sufficiently after the stadium was only half full for Sunday's 100 metres final, the event's biggest moment.

Nebiolo enters the final weeks of his campaign to host the 2004 Olympics, television pictures showing thousands of empty seats were broadcast around the world while the American Maurice Greene was winning an exciting battle with Donovan Bailey for the 100 title.

While Athens' old Olympic stadium was packed for Friday's opening ceremony when Vangelis played "Chariots of Fire" and dancers pretended to be athletes, the sight of real runners at the two opening days at the weekend has not had the same local appeal.

There has maybe not been a gap campaign of promotion," said Nebiolo, who is also hacking Rome's rival bid for the 2004 Games.

More than 53,000 seats in the Olympic stadium have been made available to the public. While the 1993 championships in Stuttgart and the 1995 championships in Gothenburg enjoyed bumper crowds, Athens has struggled.

Nebiolo is in a difficult position diplomatically at these championships since Athens and Rome are regarded as being the two favourites to win the International Olympic Committee vote to host the Games next month. The success or failure of these championships could be an important factor.

The Greeks immediately countered criticism by saying that the nine-day programme was too long. "The programme is too big. Six days would have been better," said the Greek National Olympic Committee chief, Lambis Nikolaidou. "Perhaps the prices are too high."

Nebiolo said the IAAF had decided to prevent any repetition of action by supporters of the Athens bid at a huge banner was displayed in the stadium on Saturday and Sunday. The IAAF does not allow advertising in the stadium from any of the five cities bidding for the Games. Athens and Rome are bidding against Cape Town, Buenos Aires and Stockholm: a decision will be taken in Lausanne next month.

2007 Olympia, Washington, WA

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Manchester City could be set to leave Maine Road and move to a new £70,000 football stadium. Francis Lee, the club's chairman, has confirmed the First Division club are looking at moving to a new venue which is under construction at Eastlands for the Commonwealth Games in 2002.

Lee was speaking as plans were unveiled at Maine Road, City's home of 77 years, for a second temporary stand to fit in an extra 2,000 fans for the forthcoming season.

Wolves have lost their appeal against the £250,000 they were ordered to pay Leicester for goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac. The Molineux club were told to pay him the money last September, despite his claim that he had been

due to problems over a work permit, Leicester successfully argued that Mr Webb had reneged on buying the player.

Des Hamilton, the Newcastle wing-back bought for £1.25m from Bradford, is expected to be out of action for only a few weeks, rather than a few months which was feared after he injured his right ankle in Sunday's 3-2 friendly defeat by Juventus.

Brentford are looking for a new manager five days before the start of the new season after Dave Webb accepted the role of chief executive.

Norwegian defender Jon Olav Hjelde has completed his £600,000 move to Nottingham Forest and is likely to take the place of coach at B'rd. Yel-

Mickelson, who led going into the final round, was never seriously challenged on the final day as he cruised to a seven-point victory over the Australian Stuart Appleby in delightful playing conditions at

Castle Pines. He compiled a round of five birdies and one bogey for a four-under-par 68 worth nine points under the Modified Stableford format used for the event.

The scoring system awards five points for an eagle, two for a birdie, zero for par, and subtracts one point for a bogey and three for a double-bogey or worse.

Mickelson finished with 48 points to become the first player to win the title twice in the event's 12-year history. He also beat his own tournament record of 45 points, set in 1993. He recorded two eagles, 21 birdies and four bogeys for an unofficial 21-under 267 total.

"I played four good rounds and that's something I haven't done too much this year. It gives me a bit of momentum going into the PGA Championship," said Mickelson of the year's final major championship in two weeks' time.

The fifth PGA Tour victory of his career and second of the year was worth \$306,000 and 150 Ryder Cup points, which pushed Mickelson up from ninth to fifth place in the US standings.

The top 10 players after the PGA Championship automatically gain selection for the American team that will challenge Europe, the holders, at Valderrama, Spain, next month.

Baseball

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Montreal 6, San Diego 3. Philadelphia 10, St. Louis 1. Pittsburgh 8, Colorado 2. Cincinnati 1, New York 0. **AMERICAN LEAGUE:** Boston 3, NY Mets 2. New York 4, Atlanta 4. Chicago Cubs 4, Los Angeles 3. **112 innings.** **WORLD SERIES:** New York Yankees 4, St. Louis Cardinals 0. **PLAYOFFS:** NY Yankees 6, Minnesota 5. Kansas City 5, Boston 2. Seattle 8, Milwaukee 5. Baltimore 7, Oakland 5. Cleveland 4, Chicago White Sox 3. Texas 6, Cleveland 2.

Basketball

James Hamilton, the Budweiser League's highest paid rebounder last season, has signed Eagle Londoner's 310 invited. Washington Redskins' re-signed Danny Lewis. Earl Brown and Neville Austin are negotiating with Alan Cunningham, Tony Windless and Keith Robinson. Windless and Robinson are threatening to leave the league through lack of sponsorship, will confirm later this week if they will compete next season.

Boxing

Joe Frazier's latest County Championship (Johns Trophy) (Royal Licensing Society) Semi-final: Gomezest vs Norfolk 115-108. Yorkshire vs Frazier 123-118.

1500 metres sand track (first four in each heat):
 1. H. Hunt 51.5; 2. J. A. G. 52.2; 3. J. B. 52.7; 4. J. A. G. 54.5; 5. A. P. 54.9; 6. A. P. 55.8; 7. D. G. 56.2; 8. D. G. 56.9; 9. H. Hunt 57.0; 10. H. Hunt 57.5; 11. H. Hunt 58.0; 12. H. Hunt 58.5; 13. H. Hunt 59.0; 14. H. Hunt 59.5; 15. H. Hunt 60.0; 16. H. Hunt 60.5; 17. H. Hunt 61.0; 18. H. Hunt 61.5; 19. H. Hunt 62.0; 20. H. Hunt 62.5; 21. H. Hunt 63.0; 22. H. Hunt 63.5; 23. H. Hunt 64.0; 24. H. Hunt 64.5; 25. H. Hunt 65.0; 26. H. Hunt 65.5; 27. H. Hunt 66.0; 28. H. Hunt 66.5; 29. H. Hunt 67.0; 30. H. Hunt 67.5; 31. H. Hunt 68.0; 32. H. Hunt 68.5; 33. H. Hunt 69.0; 34. H. Hunt 69.5; 35. H. Hunt 70.0; 36. H. Hunt 70.5; 37. H. Hunt 71.0; 38. H. Hunt 71.5; 39. H. Hunt 72.0; 40. H. Hunt 72.5; 41. H. Hunt 73.0; 42. H. Hunt 73.5; 43. H. Hunt 74.0; 44. H. Hunt 74.5; 45. H. Hunt 75.0; 46. H. Hunt 75.5; 47. H. Hunt 76.0; 48. H. Hunt 76.5; 49. H. Hunt 77.0; 50. H. Hunt 77.5; 51. H. Hunt 78.0; 52. H. Hunt 78.5; 53. H. Hunt 79.0; 54. H. Hunt 79.5; 55. H. Hunt 80.0; 56. H. Hunt 80.5; 57. H. 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Wigby Union
Bill Watson, the former Scotland No 8, has been appointed as the Scottish Rugby Union's new chief executive. Watson, who has been with the union since 1973 and 1979 and who has coached both Boroughmuir and Bigger, is currently overseas business development director for the union. He will be expected to return to take up his post on September 1.

Grizedale volunteer signed the Ireland Under-21 hooker David Lee from Cork Con. The signing follows his former clubmate's move to Bury and David Corkery to the Memorial Ground.

Grizedale have appointed Welsh international Gareth Thomas as their captain for the new Welsh League premier division season.

Swansea

WELSH AND IRELAND LIFE COVERS WELSH: Mead Class 1st; 2nd: Wales; 3rd: Wales; 4th: Wales; 5th: Wales; 6th: Wales; 7th: Wales; 8th: Wales; 9th: Wales; 10th: Wales; 11th: Wales; 12th: Wales; 13th: Wales; 14th: Wales; 15th: Wales; 16th: Wales; 17th: Wales; 18th: Wales; 19th: Wales; 20th: Wales; 21st: Wales; 22nd: Wales; 23rd: Wales; 24th: Wales; 25th: Wales; 26th: Wales; 27th: Wales; 28th: Wales; 29th: Wales; 30th: Wales; 31st: Wales; 32nd: Wales; 33rd: Wales; 34th: Wales; 35th: Wales; 36th: Wales; 37th: Wales; 38th: Wales; 39th: Wales; 40th: Wales; 41st: Wales; 42nd: Wales; 43rd: Wales; 44th: Wales; 45th: Wales; 46th: Wales; 47th: Wales; 48th: Wales; 49th: Wales; 50th: Wales; 51st: Wales; 52nd: Wales; 53rd: Wales; 54th: Wales; 55th: Wales; 56th: Wales; 57th: Wales; 58th: Wales; 59th: Wales; 60th: Wales; 61st: Wales; 62nd: Wales; 63rd: Wales; 64th: Wales; 65th: Wales; 66th: Wales; 67th: Wales; 68th: Wales; 69th: Wales; 70th: Wales; 71st: Wales; 72nd: Wales; 73rd: Wales; 74th: Wales; 75th: Wales; 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Today's events in Athens and TV times

1500: Decathlon - 160 metres.
1505: Women's discus qualifying (group A).
1515: Women's 400 metres hurdles first round.
1530: Decathlon - long jump, two groups.
1540: Men's 110 metres hurdles first round.
1555: Women's discus qualifying (group B).
1605: Decathlon - shot put, two groups.
1645: Decathlon - high jump.
1500: Men's 900 metres second round.
1540: Men's 110m final.
1545: Men's 120 metres hurdles second round.
1600: Men's long jump final.
1645: Women's 1,500 metres final.
1645: Women's shot put qualifying round, two groups.
1655: Women's 10,000 metres final.
1740: Men's 400 metres final.
1800: Decathlon - 400 metres.
19: European 0600-10.00, 11.00-23.30, 15.30-19.15. BBC2 05.25-06.20, 15.30-20.00.

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 #2 **Dave & Sheila Lippard** (*Die Road!*)
 #3 **Thomas Van Pelt** (*Shoreline*)
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99 and not out

Peter Davenport, Macclesfield's target man, talks to Phil Shaw, page 22

sport

Newcastle's old boy

Steve Howey talks to Simon Turnbull, page 22

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIP: Heptathlete's best not enough to beat German as there is disappointment for Hansen

Lewis has to settle for a silver medal

MIKE ROWBOTTOM
reports from Athens

Denise Lewis last night won the first medal of the World Championships for Great Britain as she took silver in the heptathlon behind the favourite, Sabina Braun of Germany.

Lewis, who finished with a total of 6,654 points, put in a performance that had scarcely any weak links, doing justice to a talent which brought her the Olympic bronze medal in Atlanta last summer.

In the absence of the injured defending champion, Ghada Shouaa, it appeared that Lewis, who broke her Commonwealth record earlier this year, had a chance of gold. Unfortunately for her, the 32-year-old from Essex produced the performance of her life to win with 6,739 points.

Ashia Hansen, who reached yesterday's triple-jump championship amid rising British hopes of a first championship medal, was unable to rise to the occasion. Hansen, who headed the qualifying with a leap of 14.77 metres, had had preparations for Athens disrupted by a back injury which affected her ability to sprint.

Her performance on Saturday left her in some pain and she received immediate physiotherapy. But the competition last night appeared to reveal that the 24-year-old was still hampered. With her sixth and final attempt on the night, she stood fifth after a competition in which several of her rivals had surpassed themselves.

In a vain attempt to raise herself, she encouraged the crowd to clap. But the effort was in vain. Her distance was 14.49m - her best on the night, but not enough to lift her in the placings.

As she shook hands with her opponents, a wry smile came to her face. She had simply not been able to raise her level of



High hopes: Britain's Dalton Grant sails over the bar, on his way to the qualifying for the final of high jump in Athens yesterday

Photograph: Mike Powell/Allsport

performance like several of those around her.

Hansen had been hoping for a progression, having finished fourth at last summer's Olympic Games and then taken the silver medal at the World Indoor

Championships in March. The hop and the step were promising, but the jump proved too much. Hansen's coach, Aston Moore, had said beforehand that Hansen's confidence - something which has let her

down in more than one major championship - was now strong. "She feels like she belongs with the top jumpers now," he said. She did not look out of place yesterday but was clearly operating well below peak

efficiency. As she had feared beforehand, Romania's Rodica Matescu, whom she had referred to as "the dark horse", had come through strongly as a gold medal challenger, adding two centimetres to her

world best of the year when she managed 15.16m on her first attempt. It looked enough for the gold medal, but Sarka Kasparikova surpassed with her fifth jump, reaching out to 15.20.

There was further disappointment for Britain on the night as Steve Smith, the Olympic bronze medallist failed to qualify for the high jump final. Smith, who has been troubled by an Achilles

tendon injury for the last three weeks, was only able to manage 2.26m.

However, his colleague Dalton Grant, who joined the British squad late because of suspected food poisoning did get through, making the official qualifying height of 2.28, his season's best.

In the 400m hurdles final, Stephane Diagana of France defeated the American favourite Bryan Bronson with a time of 47.70sec.

In the women's 400m, Cathy Freeman of Australia took the gold in 49.77sec and then, just as she had done in winning the Commonwealth Games three years ago, took the flags representing both Australia and the Australian Aborigines on her lap of honour.

Steve Backley sets out today in pursuit of the global gold which he wants, which, according to him, he needs to round off his achievements in the javelin.

As usual, one of the main problems for Britain's Olympic silver medallist is the Czech Republic's gold medallist Jan Zelezny, who was the leading qualifier on Sunday night.

Zelezny's effort - 83.66m - was far from awe inspiring, but he gained a slight psychological advantage in qualifying, out-right with one throw while Backley had to wait for confirmation that his 81.40m was enough.

Mick Hill, who qualified with 82.24, will also be hoping to add a World Championship medal to the bronze he won in 1993.

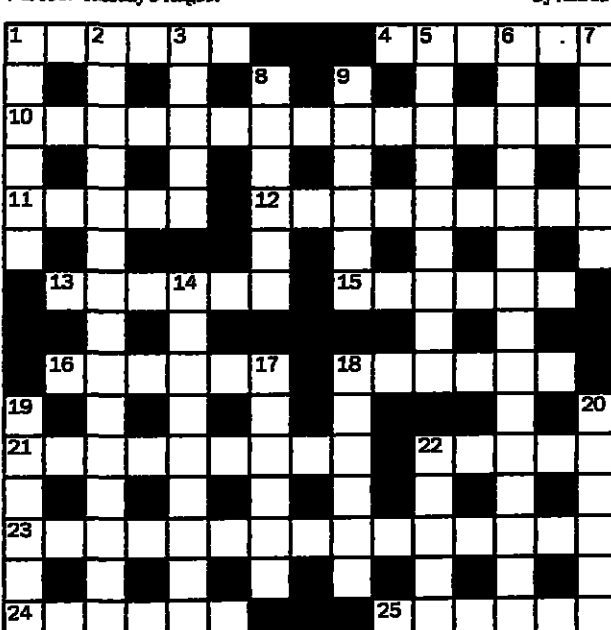
The lurking danger in the field is the home thrower, Kostas Gatsioudis, who is likely to attract a large, partisan crowd - something which will please the International Amateur Athletic Federation president, Primo Nebiolo, who has expressed his disapproval of the relatively sparse numbers who witnessed Sunday night's 100m finals.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3369 Tuesday 5 August

By Alfred

Monday's Solution



COMEDOWN EARTHFUL
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M A Y R E M E N G E N D E R

- ACROSS**
- 1 Reel, being cut with lots of wine? (6)
 - 4 About to teach in place of prestige (6)
 - 10 Prisons for those of European descent? (5,5,5)
 - 11 Going through books of car firm takes time (5)
 - 12 More to pay when up on French indictment? (9)
 - 13 Ill-tempered, having to put on second diaper (6)
 - 15 Greek island's short of food (6)
 - 16 What you'll have to pay to get into work over a pretentious type (6)
 - 18 Free cleaner given to worker (6)
 - 21 Count Bari out as a place where growth is encouraged (9)

- DOWN**
- 1 Archer has to show respect at place where Douglas is found (6)
 - 2 Mutual organisation is edifying everybody? (8,7)
 - 3 Useless in English and another school subject (5)
 - 5 Free house local, could be in charge of such drink (9)

- 6 As a rule you might have expected to find saints here? (4,5,6)
- 7 Wasting asset's given liberal sort of decoration (6)
- 8 Go by jumbo eating tree which could be tasteless (6)
- 9 Male gets sweet-smelling thing for old car (6)
- 14 Fruit's British, a supermarket stock which goes down perfectly (5,4)
- 17 Get in boat which is decrepit (6)
- 18 See Irish have a try to get fierce woman (6)
- 19 Stupid amount to spend on Chinese dish (3,3)
- 20 In frenzy, merely a thing to speed up reaction (6)
- 22 Make strenuous effort for endless bliss (5)

Morceli made to work for place

Nouredidine Morceli, bidding for a fourth successive world 1500m title, was made to work hard before winning his semi-final on the third day of the World Championships yesterday.

Morceli, the world record holder and Olympic champion, could not afford to relax as the Spaniards Reyes Estevez and the former Olympic champion Fermin Cacho controlled the race from the front until the last few metres when Morceli took the lead.

The Algerian, who was never out of the leading pack, won in 3min 38.82sec ahead of Cacho and Estevez, who both clocked 3:38.86.

Morceli's main rival for the title, Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj, came through his

semi-final a few minutes earlier, but had a comparatively less severe test, winning in 3:38.92 to set up a fascinating duel in tomorrow's final.

El Guerrouj, who has run four of the five fastest times of the year, will be especially keen to win the world crown for the first time after his Olympic hopes ended in last year's final in Atlanta when he fell.

Kenya's Laban Rotich, the second fastest man in the world this year, also looked in good form and qualified comfortably in 3:38.92.

Sonia O'Sullivan aims to complete the first leg of a World Championship double knowing that fortune finally looks to be turning in her favour.

A year ago, O'Sullivan was struck down by a debilitating bug which left her a pale shadow of the runner who had dominated the world all season.

Instead of leaving Atlanta with the anticipated golden haul, she departed the United States in tears, forced to drop out of the 5,000m final and not even getting through the first round of the 1500m.

Those problems seemed to continue into this year as she left Sheffield's Don Valley Stadium in June after finishing so far behind Britain's Kelly Holmes in the 1500m that she was virtually being written off.

But, six weeks later, the 27-year-old from Cobh, whose main aim when she flew out to Athens was defending her Gothenburg

5,000m crown, is now favourite for today's 1500m final.

First, Holmes, the world No 1, crashed out with an Achilles problem, then defending champion Hassiba Boulmerka of Algeria failed to show for her heat and on Sunday the Olympic gold medallist Svetlana Masterkova also succumbed to her injury problems.

O'Sullivan had singled out Holmes and Masterkova as her two main rivals, and after doing the minimum possible so far, she now has a confident aura.

"I think I've proved my fitness now and I've not got down to my last training session yet," said O'Sullivan, who ran her fastest race of the season in the semi-final, despite lying 10th with 400m to go.

Her main threats are likely to be American Regina Jacobs and Russia's Olga Nelyubova. But the acceleration O'Sullivan showed in moving through almost the entire field in the space of 150m before settling for a gentle finish will have been noted by her rivals and if the race is run slowly, that speed could be crucial.

"Hopefully things will work out. I've had a day off today and we'll see how it goes from here," O'Sullivan said. "The good thing so far is that I haven't really been nervous at all and if I can stay relaxed, it will help."

"All I want to do is run my best possible race and take it from there. I've worked hard all year and now I'm here. I'm going to make the most of it."

Britain's 400m trio set up historic final

Britain will have three 400 metres runners in a global final for the first time in history tonight; but the No 1 of the trio, Iwan Thomas, appears to be increasingly hampered by a knee problem.

Thomas, Mark Richardson and Jamie Baulch formed a block booking after coming safely through their semi-finals. However, Thomas, who was being thought of as a potential performance here before Michael Johnson's arrival on a wild card,

walked heavily away after finishing fourth, and spent much time frowning and stretching before leaving without comment.

Britain's record holder has been complaining for several days of a nagging injury behind his right knee. Having said that, he ran 44.61sec, which made him the fastest Briton. His race was won by Johnson, who quelled some of the doubts that his previous day's absent-minded performance had raised by running 44.37 with apparent ease.

Richardson was second behind another American, Tyree Washington, in 44.62, with Baulch third in 44.69. Like Thomas, Richardson is troubled by a knee injury, but it is clearly not affecting his level of performance.

"I've got to be pleased with a season's best slowing down," Richardson said. "It's a job well done. I wanted to get into the top two so I can get a middle lane in the final. It's super stuff to have all three of us there."

He paid tribute to his trainer,

Mark Zambada, who has been working on his leg. "I wouldn't be running here if it wasn't for him," Richardson said. "He's an amazing guy. I'm not letting the injury affect me. If it's going to go, it's going to go."

Baulch, who as far as anyone knows is not suffering from either illness or injury, spoke to his coach, Linford Christie, afterwards. "I didn't really go for it in the first 200 metres," he said. "I was just telling myself 'You are The Man.'"

Today will tell. But the man whom most expect to be The Man, Johnson, provided a more reassuring show after finishing

only as third of the four fastest losers in the second round. "I felt good," Johnson said. "I don't know what shape I'm going to be in tomorrow. I didn't have any problems yesterday. I just made a mistake and I was very upset with myself."

He neither looks nor acts like the man who won two golds at the Atlanta Olympics last summer. The injury he suffered in his One-to-One challenge with Donovan Bailey at the end of May still appears to be having a knock-on effect. There is a chunk of light for the Brits, then. But Johnson does not look as if he will need his best to retain his title.

Look out for David Nash.
We did.

A Middlesex batsman and wicket keeper, David has progressed through the NatWest Development of Excellence to represent the NatWest England Under 19 side against Pakistan and New Zealand. In achieving a high score of 98 not out, 26 catches and 2 stumpings, he's obviously a good man to have behind you. Unless, of course, you're batting.

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